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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the early care and educational services for children in Quebec since reforms of 1997 intended to place the interests and well-being of children and families at the center of its family policy. Chapter 1 describes early childhood care and education (ECCE) system prior to and since the reforms. The chapter describes the components of this system as including: (1) center-based child care for children birth to 4 years and family child care for children birth to 12 years, both overseen by early childhood agencies (CPEs); (2) school-age child care programs; and (3) full-day kindergarten for 5-year-olds. Funding for restructuring the ECCE system is detailed, including the gradual introduction of a universal regulated $5-a-day child care program and a massive increase in public funding. Specific measures related to the educational program and child care staff training are described. Chapter 2 focuses on the center-based component of the system and presents issues raised by directors in a 1998 study of child care centers, including financial stability of centers, clientele with special needs, staff compensation and working conditions, complying with regulations, facility-related concerns, and staff morale. Chapter 3 considers the family child care component, examining the reasons behind the government decision to make it the cornerstone of the ECCE system, identifying some pitfalls related to this policy, and discussing ways to ensure that family care services are given a prominent role. Chapter 4 describes school-age child care programs, focusing on their evolution since the introduction of reform and examining their strengths and weakness. Chapter 5 explores additional questions, including issues related to family care provider training, standards for CPEs and commercial child care centers, the lack of males in the ECCE system, the status of family child care providers, and the CPE as a business enterprise. The paper's three appendices discuss parents'

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expressed preference for family child care, the link between the size of the child care group and the providers' income, and the definition of "family environment." (Contains 41 references.) (KB)

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Jocelyne Tougas

April 2002

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She has been involved in the field since the late 70's, first as a parent searching desperately for quality child care, then as Executive Director of Québec's Association of Family Day Care Agencies, from 1983 to 1993. From 1993 to 1996, she worked as Executive Director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada.

Since 1996, as a consultant, she has been co-ordinating the Canadian Union of Postal Worker's child care fund for Québec – helping to set up projects for the Québec and Montreal locals and supporting the Union in its actions to improve access to quality child care both in Québec and in Canada.

In 1997, Ms. Tougas became one of the principal researchers on the *You Bet I Care* study on wages, working conditions and practices in child care in Canada. Currently, she is a member of the Steering Committee of the Family Day Care Training project sponsored by the Canadian Child Care Federation.

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1

Child care services at the heart of Québec's family policy

INTRODUCTION

In January 1997, the government of Québec announced three key family policy measures which would, in the words of then Premier Lucien Bouchard

> *support some of the Government's major objectives, including the fight against poverty, equal opportunity, the development of the social market economy, transition from welfare to the workforce and increased supports to working parents. In addition to being at the centre of the Government's strategy, these new measures reinforce the most important values of our society: sense of family and love of children.*[1]

The three measures in question were first, an integrated child benefit for low-income families, second, good quality early childhood education and child care services, and third, an improved parental insurance plan. Pauline Marois, then Minister of Education with responsibility for child and family policy, added:

> *in Québec, as elsewhere in the world, society revolves around the family. It is where our children learn the values that help them grow and open to the world. Despite the fact that a majority of families consist of two parents and their children, the picture is progressively changing. We find more and more lone parent families and blended families, and more women are active in the labour force. The Government needed to adapt its policies to the changing needs of families. This is why our new family policy measures aim at insuring all children in Québec benefit from conditions that promote, through early childhood intervention and care, their development and success in school.*[2]

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[1] Government of Québec (1997). Translated excerpt *from Communiqué 23 janvier 1997.* On line: http://www.famille-enfance.gouv.qc.ca/5_communique/19_communique.html.
[2] Ibid.

These statements are revealing, illustrating as they do the Québec government's recognition of the multiple dimensions of early childhood care and education (ECCE) and the important place accorded to it in government policy. The Premier asserted that ECCE is central to the government's social development strategy, while Minister Marois considered ECCE to be vital to child development. Québec invests public funds in ECCE because, in addition to supporting employment and allowing parents to play an active role in the workforce, ECCE also supports parents in their parenting role; furthermore, it provides both an opportunity for the transmission of values and a stimulating environment in which children can learn, develop and grow. Québec's Act Respecting Childcare Centres and Childcare Services, which came into effect in 1997, stipulates that:

> *every child is entitled to receive good, continuous, personal childcare until the end of primary school.*[3]

This vision of child care is close to that of the Scandinavian countries; in Denmark, for instance, parents have since 1993 been assured spaces in state-subsidized child care for children aged from 1 to 6. Child care in Denmark is regarded as a matter of children's rights and is based on the Danish philosophy that the State has a responsibility for the well-being of its citizens.[4]

Before the 1997 reform

The mandate assigned to early childhood care and education in Québec, and the multiple roles attributed to it led the government to re-examine the education programs offered to children between the ages of 0 and 12, and to introduce major changes. Before moving to a discussion of these changes, however, we should look at the situation of Québec's child care system before 1997, a relatively well developed system.

Before 1997, the child care system for children aged from 0 to 5 consisted of some 78,000 regulated spaces; roughly 60,000 of these were in centre-based and 18,000 in family child care. The system received approximately $240 million annually in government funding for equipment, operating costs and fee subsidies (for low-income families). Responsibility for child care lay with the Office des services de garde à l'enfance, a government agency mandated to determine child care needs, develop child care services consistent with Québec's other family policies, and regulate and ensure child care quality.

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[3] Government of Québec (1997). *An act respecting childcare centres and childcare services.* Éditeur officiel du Québec. Paragraph 2.

[4] Beach, J., Bertrand, J. and Cleveland, G. (1998). *Our childcare workforce: From recognition to remuneration: More than a labour of love.* Ottawa: Child Care Human Resource Study Steering Committee, c/o Canadian Child Care Federation, p. 20.

At the time of the 1997 reform, responsibility for the Office lay with the Ministry of Education (Ministère de l'Education or MEQ); at the time of the Office's creation in 1979, however, the Department of Health and Social Affairs had had the responsibility, and at yet another point, it was Québec's Status of Women Department that was responsible. Despite these changes in departmental responsibility, however, the child care portfolio had for some time been consistently the responsibility of the same Minister, both before and after the reform. This continuity, together with the determination, persistence and convictions of that Minister, may well have played a key role in determining the Québec government's approach and its decisions on child care. A thorough understanding of child care and its many ramifications is required to recognize its full social and economic significance, to see it as more than a purely private issue of primarily parental concern, and to make the political decision to invest massively in a child care system.

Minister Pauline Marois stated:

> *what is proposed by the new family policy measures is a gigantic effort in child care, a necessary step for the future of our society.*[5]

For children of school age (ages 6 to 12), the system of child care programs delivered in 1998 approximately 92,500 spaces divided among some 800 programs in Québec's elementary schools,[6] and received an estimated $41 million in government funding. School age programs were, and still are, the responsibility of the MEQ.

However, the 78,000 spaces in regulated centre-based and family child care, and the 92,500 in school age child care were insufficient to meet the demand or fulfill child development or family support objectives. A survey conducted in 1998 by Québec's statistics bureau (BSQ) revealed that 70% of families with children under the age of five and 62% of families with children ages 6 to 12 used child care, with 49% of them doing so on a regular basis so that parents could work or study.[7] This makes for a large number, as there are approximately 1.1 million children under the age of 12 in Québec. Because of a shortage of space, the majority of those children – 52.6%[8] – did not have access to regulated child care of known and monitored quality. Further, given the eligibility criteria for the child care fee subsidy (financial exemption) program, a program targeting primarily low-income families – i.e. those with an annual income of between $12,000 and $40,300 (for a two-parent family

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[5] Government of Québec (1997). *Communiqué 23 janvier 1997*. On line: http://www.famille-enfance.gouv.qc.ca/5_communique/19_communique.html.
[6] Childcare Resource and Research Unit (2000). *Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada – Provinces and Territories 1998*. On line: http://www.child carecanada.org.
[7] Bureau de la statistique du Québec (1999). *Enquête sur les besoins des familles en matière de services de garde*. Éditeur officiel du Québec, pp. 25–26.
[8] Ibid., Table 3.1.2.

with two children) – a large proportion of middle-income families did not have the means to pay the fees required for regulated care.[9] This meant that, even if access to a space in regulated care had been available, these families would have been obliged to have their child cared for outside the subsidized, regulated system, or to let the child go home alone after school.

Québec families thus found the regulated child care system inaccessible and unaffordable. With a surge of research studies attesting to the importance for young children and their future of care in a healthy and safe environment that is stimulating and enriching, the government made the decision to reorganize the child care system and to integrate it into the early childhood care and education component of Québec's new family policy.

Early Childhood Care and Education: After the Reform

Québec's educational services for children now have three major components – early childhood agencies (centres de la petite enfance [CPEs]), school-age child care programs and full-day kindergarten. In order to support the child care reform and ensure its implementation, the Government of Québec began first by creating in May 1997 a new Ministry, the Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance. It's mission "to foster with the assistance of family partners the overall development of children and families". It took over the responsibilities that belonged to the Office des services de garde à l'enfance and the Secrétariat à la famille.

The first component, under the aegis of the Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance (MFE) is centre-based child care (group child care) for children ages 0 to 4; and family child care for children ages 0 to 12. These two types of setting are overseen by single organizations, known as *centres de la petite enfance* (CPE) or early childhood agencies. Eventually, other, more flexible modes of child care will be added to these in order to meet a wider variety of needs (such as the need for child care outside of normal working hours). The CPEs were created out of the non-profit child care centres and family child care agencies that formed the cornerstone of the system until 1997. All CPEs are non-profit and run by boards of directors on which the majority of members are parent users.

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[9] Median monthly parent fee for full-time care in child care centres: $477 (0 to 17 months), $455 (18 months to 3 years), $440 (3 to 5 years, 11 months). Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on: Wages, working conditions, and practices in child care centres.* Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being, University of Guelph, Ontario, Table 10.6. Median daily fees charged in family child care: $21 (infants) and $20 (18 months to 5 years, 11 months), in Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., Tougas, J., LaGrange, A. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in regulated family child care across Canada.* Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being, University of Guelph, Ontario, Table 5.5.

As of March 31, 2000, Québec boasted 865 CPEs. Table 1.1 illustrates the growth in the number of spaces available in CPEs since the start of the reform. It should be noted that as of December 31, 2000, there were 114,553 spaces in regulated child care in Québec. This includes the spaces available in for-profit (commercial) child care centres and centres with boards without a parent-user majority (i.e. those run by school boards and municipalities that are not part of the CPEs.

TABLE 1.1: GROWTH IN NUMBER OF CPE SPACES AND TOTAL NUMBER OF SPACES AVAILABLE IN REGULATED CHILD CARE, BY COMPONENT, 1997/98 TO 2000/2001

Year	Number of CPEs	Spaces in centre-based care	Spaces in family child care	Total number of spaces in CPEs	Spaces in other child care*	Total number of spaces available
1997/8	—	36,606	21,761	58,367	23,935	82,302
1998/9	820	38,918	32,816	71,734	24,964	96,698
1999/2000	865	44,735	44,882	89,617	24,936	114,553
2000/2001**	–	49,734	54,254	103,988	25,571	129,559
2001/2002***	915	54,740	59,277	114,017	25,666	1,396

* Spaces available in commercial child care centres and centres with boards without a parent-user majority that are not part of CPEs.
** Figures as of December 31, 2000.
***The most recent figures available (September 30, 2001).

Community dimension and support for parents

The government decided that Québec's child care system should consist essentially of not-for-profit, community-based organizations (as opposed to private for-profit ones), to be administered by parents, thus giving parents a prominent role in service delivery and educational choice. It should be noted that, although Québec's child care system is often considered to be a public system, it is not state-run in the same way as are, for example, the schools. Each CPE is independent, with its own charter and regulations. Although these must respect the parameters of Québec's act *Respecting Child Care Centres and Child Care Services*, they give each CPE a certain uniqueness and d.. tinct character.

The government hopes that CPEs will gradually become *"forums for exchange and mutual support between parents,"* that they will deliver services to parents and work with other partners in the community (health and social services, municipalities, education, community and family groups, etc.) to make programs accessible to the greatest number. This is a concrete means of confirming that the primary responsibility for children's education lies

with the parents and that the parents must be directly involved and a driving force in the administrative and educational decisions that concern them.

Socio-educational dimension

The very nature of CPEs, indeed their raison d'être, is socio-educational. They care for several hundred thousand children from all segments of society, from the first months of their life until they start school. The aim of Québec's 1997 Act is *"to enhance the quality of educational childcare provided by childcare centres, day care centres, nursery schools and home childcare providers, and of childcare provided by stop-over centres so as to ensure the health and safety and foster the development and well-being of the children to whom childcare is provided."*[10] Consequently, CPEs have the obligation and responsibility to ensure the basic care that is necessary to protect children's health and safety, and to provide them with a stimulating environment in which they may develop to their full potential.

School-age child care programs

A second aspect of early childhood education, not formally presented as part of Québec's family policy but nonetheless closely associated with it, is Québec's system of before- and after-school child care programs. It is currently estimated that there are no fewer than 1,249 school-age child care programs in Québec's various elementary schools, serving at least 150,000 children between the ages of 5 and 12 in the elementary system. The fact that school-age care is not immediately linked with Québec's family policy and the system of CPEs and other child care services is without doubt because it falls within the jurisdiction of the MEQ, and not the MFE as do the others. Its funding is assured by the MEQ through the school boards. Like the other forms of regulated child care in Québec, since the implementation of Québec's ECCE reform this sector has undergone spectacular growth.

TABLE 1.2: OVERVIEW OF THE GROWTH OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE PROGRAMS AND USERS

Year	School-age child care programs	Number of children enrolled
1978/79 [a]	37	–
1988/89 [b]	574	37,000
1996/97	841	75,000
1997/98 [c]	922	92,600
1998/99 [d]	1,090	120,500
1999/2000	1,235	150,300
2000/2001 *	1,249	152,164

[a] Creation of school-age child care programs.

[10] Government of Québec (1997). *An Act respecting childcare centres and childcare services.* Éditeur officiel du Québec, Paragraph 1.1.

[b] Policy statement recommending acceleration of expansion and development of the system.
[c] Full-day kindergarten and homework assistance program.
[d] $5/day program.
* On November 23, 2000.
Source: Association des services de garde en milieu scolaire du Québec.
(See also Chapter 4, which deals more specifically with school-age child care and provides an overview of the current situation and issues.)

The effect of full-day kindergarten

The third component of the government's ECCE strategy is full-day kindergarten for 5-year-olds, another MEQ program. The decision to introduce this was based on research showing a direct relationship between the length of time spent in kindergarten and the reduction of both elementary school grade-repeating rates and high-school dropout rates, and underlining the positive role of kindergarten in subsequent schooling, social integration and personality development. The government decided to follow the many recommendations it had received in this regard and to offer full-day kindergarten to all 5-year-olds and, as of September 1997, half-day kindergarten combined with free early childhood education and care for 4-year-olds from disadvantaged areas. This last measure was introduced gradually, first in metropolitan Montréal, then in Québec City, and finally in other high-poverty areas.

Although attendance is optional, more than 98% of Québec's 5-year olds are enrolled in full-day kindergarten. The program has also received strong support within the education system. With the introduction of full-day kindergarten came the implementation of a revitalized educational program adapted to the longer hours involved, and designed to prepare pre-school children for elementary school while avoiding the pitfall of too-early schooling.

A way was needed to facilitate the transition among the various ECCE services (CPEs, kindergarten, school-age child care), avoid duplication and ensure cohesion among the various programs provided by the different services; the government's response was to set up a "harmonization and integration" committee composed of all the various stakeholders.

Funding the early childhood care and education system

The restructuring of the ECCE system became reality with the gradual introduction of a universal regulated $5-a-day child care program, an in-depth overhaul of the terms of child care funding, and a massive increase in public funding.

The effect of $5-a-day child care

The MFE uses the term "reduced rate spaces" to designate spaces available for $5 a day in centre-based and family child care provided by CPEs, in subsidized child care centres that are not part of CPEs,[11] and in school-age child care. The system was introduced in stages. Initially, in September 1997, $5-a-day spaces were made available to 4-year-olds. In 1998, they became available for 3-year-olds and for children attending school-age programs. The government had set 2001 as the deadline for making the program accessible to all age groups, but was obliged to reconsider as a result of the program's popularity and pressure from parents. In the Fall of 2000, access to $5-a-day spaces was expanded to include infants so that all children aged 0 to 12 attending CPEs, school-age programs and subsidized centres could benefit.

It is important to note that the program is not simply an employment support measure; access to regulated child care — and hence to $5 spaces — is not restricted to parents in the workforce or enrolled in school. All families are eligible. Furthermore, children from low-income families may attend child care free of charge for 23 hours a week. The Ministry thus recognizes the role played by early childhood care and education in prevention and early intervention. *"implementing this type of early intervention program will promote equality of opportunity among children, prevent learning disabilities and foster the development of required skills to enter school."*[12] For children attending school-age programs to be eligible for the $5-a-day subsidy, they must attend child care on a regular basis for a minimum of 2 hours a day outside school hours.

For low-income families with children attending regulated, unsubsidized child care centres, (for-profit or are not part of the $5-a-day program for other reasons) the government has continued its program of financial aid and exemptions based on family income.

Funding

Funding for the three types of child care settings (centre-based, family-based and school-based) is based on criteria that are, as one might suspect, highly complex. Criteria in each of the three settings are tied to current regulations (building requirements, ratios, group sizes, personnel certification and pay scales). A detailed examination of these funding mechanisms is not really relevant to this discussion, except to specify that the government funds capital costs in non-profit child care centres, covering more than 80% of their operating costs,

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[11] "Subsidized" child care centres are either commercial centres or centres with a board of directors on which parent users do not form the majority, and that have signed an agreement with the Ministry to make spaces available at the reduced rate.

[12] Government of Québec (1997). Translated from *Communiqué 15 mai 1997*. On line: http://www.famille-enfance.gouv.qc.ca/5_communique/21_communique.html.

including rent, general expenses, and child care and educational expenses.[13] Thus, fees paid by parents with children in regulated child care in Québec cover less than 20% of CPE or school-age program operating budgets, a significant reversal from the situation in the past, when parent fees accounted for almost 50% of the revenues of child care centres.[14] This way of funding child care has provided programs with stable financing. Child care occupancy rates no longer depend on parents' ability to pay the fees; all the spaces are full, demand is increasing and waiting lists are growing.

Despite a substantial increase in the global budget allocated to the ECCE system, however, because government funding is limited and remains focused on basic care and development, child care programs do not have the leeway to explore arrangements to meet the atypical needs of a growing number of families: irregular work schedules, evening, night and weekend shifts, part-time or casual employment, siblings, children with special needs, etc. Such arrangements are more labour intensive – and subsequently more expensive to provide – primarily because the adult-child ratio frequently needs to be lower, given the specific needs of the children, the mix of age groups or variations in attendance.

Increase in public funds invested in the child care sector

Tables 1.3 and 1.4 provide an overview of the Québec government's spending in early childhood care and education since the reform was undertaken.

TABLE 1.3: GROWTH IN FUNDING TO CPES AND REGULATED CHILD CARE, 1997/1998 TO 2000/2001

1997/8	1998/9	1999/2000	2000/2001 *
$289,860,000	$494,059,000	$615,656,000	$843,600,000

* Official projections.[15]

TABLE 1.4: GROWTH IN FUNDING TO SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS AND KINDERGARTENS, 1997/1998 TO 1999/2000

	1997/8 *	1998/9 **	1999/2000 **
School-age programs	$41,999,000	$53,550,403	$70,989,051
Kindergarten	n/a	n/a	n/a

* Estimate.

[13] For details on funding terms and conditions, consult *Règles budgétaires pour le financement des centres de la petite enfance*, published by the MFE, *and Règles budgétaires pour les investissements*, published by the MEQ.
[14] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on: Wages, working conditions, and practices in child care centres*, Table 10.1.
[15] The most recent official projections available (September 30, 2001): $1,024,436,600.

** Compiled from MEQ published reports.

The reform of child care in Québec was undertaken at a time when, as in other Canadian provinces, the government was doggedly and obsessively trying to reduce its budgetary deficit to zero by the year 2000. In order to fund the first year of the new system, the government abolished some child-related programs (family allowances, and allowances for newborn and young children) and transferred those budgets; as well, it repatriated Québec's portion of the federal Child Benefit and recovered sums allotted for provincial child care income tax deductions. Furthermore, the introduction of full-day kindergarten and the enrolment of thousands of 5-year-olds in the public school system freed up existing child care spaces. This made possible an increase in the percentage of children ages 0 to 4 in child care without requiring more investment. In the second and subsequent years, given the level of public support for the program as well as widespread pressure for greater development of child care, the government was able to justify the injection of new funds by pointing to short-term savings in social assistance, early intervention programs and remedial services.

Specific measures

Educational program

CPEs (both centre-based and family care components) and child care centres are subject to regulations governing the physical layout of their premises, children's health and safety, educational support and staff training (cf. MFE's Regulation Respecting Child Care Centres). To assist child care programs in carrying out their mandate, the government adopted a *core educational program* concurrently with the global implementation of the child care reform, requiring that it be adopted by all regulated child care services. The aim of the educational program is to ensure:

- well-rounded, harmonious development, i.e. full development of all aspects of the child's personality;
- socio-affective, moral, language, intellectual, physical and motor;
- quality education;
- educational continuity among families, CPEs and other educational services, to facilitate the child's transition to kindergarten and to foster scholastic success.[16]

[16] Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance (1997). Translation. *Child care centre educational program.* Éditeur officiel du Québec.

Although it is based on the program *Jouer, c'est magique*, a Québec version of the American High/Scope Educational Approach proposed as an intervention framework for children from disadvantaged areas, the MFE's core educational program *"is founded on basic principles regarding children and their development. It defines child development objectives and suggests concrete ways to implement the recommended educational approach. The program was developed based on data pertaining to the needs of young children, on practices fostering their development and on programs already existing in the field".*[17] It can therefore not be assumed that the MFE core program automatically excludes other pedagogical approaches recognized to have the same main objectives. It is not, strictly speaking, an "early intervention" program but rather an educational program that promotes the overall development of all children.

Support for training and promotion of the ECCE profession

In order for child care staff to understand the various facets and importance of the new core educational program, and to implement it successfully in centre-based and family child care programs, they must obviously have specialized training in child development and child care (as we know, there is a direct link between specialized training and quality child care).[18] The Québec government therefore decided to impose stricter ECCE training regulations for CPE child care workers.[19]

To facilitate access to professional development for those already working in the sector, the government provides financial support to child care providers who are enrolled in college-level courses, and at the same time compensates CPEs who need to hire substitute staff. These courses are currently delivered in 18 colleges across Québec. Government subsidies for this purpose are directed to child care organizations that provide specialized training (i.e. the 45-hour course required for family child care providers).

Given the sector's massive growth and anticipated human resource requirements, and in conjunction with the wage enhancement settlement (see Section 4.3), the government decided, in collaboration with the *Association des enseignantes et enseignants en techniques d'éducation en services de garde*, on a campaign that promotes a career in early childhood education. *"The aim of the campaign is to illustrate the key role early childhood educators have in*

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., Tougas, J., LaGrange, A. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in regulated family child care across Canada;* and Goelman, H., Doherty, G., Lero, D., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in child care centres across Canada.* Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being, University of Guelph, Ontario.

[19] Two-thirds of child care teaching staff must have a college diploma or undergraduate degree in ECCE, or three years experience plus a one-year College certificate (AEC) or a certificate in ECCE. Family child care providers must obtain a first-aid certificate within the first six months following the opening of their child care, and complete 45 hours of training in ECCE during the 24 months following the opening of the family child care home. They must devote a minimum of six hours annually to professional development.

child development and to inform high school graduates about career opportunities in this field."[20] The campaign seems to have been quite successful, with a significant increase in the number of candidates enrolled in ECCE programs.

[20] Government of Québec (2000). Translated from *Communiqué 27 janvier 2000*. On line: http://www.famille-enfance.gouv.qc.ca/5_communique/60_communique.html.

Catch-up wage increase

However, in order to recruit motivated candidates, retain and encourage current personnel to seek further training, and counterbalance the negative aspects of the profession identified by those working in the sector, it is necessary to do more than simply praise the profession. It is also essential to provide an income and working conditions that reflect the complexity, value and importance of child care work, as well as the qualities and skills needed in this field.

Recent studies in Canada have made it possible to establish the factors that serve as predictors of quality, both in centre-based and family child care. In addition to staff training, support and job satisfaction, one factor stands out above the rest as a predictor of quality: staff income levels. There is a direct link between wages and job satisfaction, with the latter having a direct influence on caregivers' attitudes towards the children. Wages are also directly linked to the turnover rate in the profession, and this in turn influences the continuity of the care received by the children.[21]

According to data from the *You Bet I Care!* study, child care teachers' wages in Québec in 1998 were on the whole inferior to those of workers in positions of comparable, or even inferior, levels and degrees of responsibility. The average gross hourly wage of early childhood educators in Québec was $10.98. The researchers compared that salary with those of licensed practical nurses and teacher's aides, in view of the similarity in responsibilities and required qualifications. It should, however, be pointed out that neither licensed practical nurses nor teacher's aides supervise other staff, as child care teachers frequently do; and teacher's assistants are under the constant supervision of an immediate superior, which is not the case for child care workers.

TABLE 1.5: COMPARISON OF AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARIES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS WITH THOSE OF OTHER OCCUPATIONS, QUÉBEC

	Early childhood educator,1998	Licensed practical nurse, 1996	Elementary and secondary school teacher assistant, 1996	Parking lot attendant 1996
Average salary	$20,667	$30,234	$28,797	$20,016

[21] Goelman, H., Doherty, G., Lero, D., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in child care centres across Canada*, Table 6.4; and Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., Tougas, J., LaGrange, A. (2000). *caring and learning environments: Quality in regulated family child care across Canada*, Table 8.3.

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The *You Bet I Care!* researchers also thought it appropriate to include in their comparison the category of "parking lot attendant" to illustrate the inequity of the situation. *"The job [of parking lot attendant] is not comparable in any way to that of child care teacher. There are no formal education requirements, the job involves passively watching inanimate objects, and virtually no decision-making is required. However, the average annual salary for a parking lot attendant … is basically the same in … Québec [as that of a child care teacher]."*[22]

On the basis of these research observations, and supported by the unions and organizations representing staff working in this sector, the Québec government decided as a catch-up measure to devote the sum of $152 million to enhance the wages of child care workers and the income of family child care providers over a four-year period, beginning in 1999/2000. The parameters for the catch-up wage increase are as follows:

- application of pay scales by job categories over four years for regular, casual and substitute staff;
- annual indexation over four years;
- recognition of training and experience in the application of pay scales;
- minimum and maximum thresholds for subsidies to regulated family child care providers.

The average wage increase in child care centres over the period will be roughly 38% to 40%. In concrete terms, a worker who earned $12.49 per hour in 1998/1999 will receive $17.30 in 2002/2003. For those running family child care homes, the minimum wage subsidy provided is $16 and the maximum is $21.

Development of the child care system

Development plan

Five-year development plans for child care have been in force in Québec since the mid-1980s to ensure systematic planning and a relative equilibrium between regional needs and the supply of services. The MFE established national development objectives on the basis of statistical data (regularly updated with the help of Québec's statistical office [BSQ]) and funds available, determining the proportion of spaces to be created in child care centres and family child care homes. Since the 1997 reform, the preparatory procedure has remained the same, although the Ministry now works with Québec's regional development councils (CRD). A number of different sectors are brought together in these CRDs: municipalities, education, health, social services, business, community organizations, and family

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[22] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on wages, working conditions and practices in child care centres,* Table 6.5.

organizations. Depending on the region, CRDs may establish committees mandated to analyze child care needs that are brought to their attention by various organizations in the community, and to report back to them. The CRDs make recommendations to the Ministry on the development of new child care services or the expansion of existing ones in its region. This fits with the Ministry's desire to coordinate and regionalize planning: *"ensuring the promotion and the development of early childhood care and education services while respecting the national objectives of the family policy."*[23]

The commercial sector's role

The general outline and objectives for the development of ECCE services are determined by the Québec government. In specific terms, Québec has decided to prioritize the development of parent-run CPEs; at least in the short term, therefore, no new commercial day care centres figure in the Ministry's development plan. However, due to high parental demand for $5-a-day spaces, and in light of the time required to develop new spaces in child care centres, agreements have been drawn up with existing commercial centres that allow them to offer reduced-rate spaces. An estimated 20,000 spaces have been "rented out" in this way by commercial centres. The amounts paid to the commercial sector were increased in 2001, following threats by the centres to withdraw from the program unless additional funding was allowed. They can also sell their assets to a group of parents. As of March 31, 2000, some 20 commercial day care centres had completed the conversion from for-profit to non-profit centres, and 25 others were well on their way to doing so.

Diversification

In 2000/2001, the MFE funded a series of pilot projects in another of the government's priority areas: that of helping parents to balance family and work responsibilities. These projects explore child care arrangements that are better suited to the non-traditional evening, weekend or night-time child care needs of some parents. The medium- and long-term objective here is to expand the range of child care services currently provided by the CPEs and subsidized by the government to provide more flexible options better suited to the needs of families. For the moment, only full-day centre-based and family child care as defined in the Act Respecting Child Care Centres are eligible for MFE funding (see the section on diversification in Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion of this question). (Although drop-in centres and nursery schools fall under the Act, there are only minimal regulations. They are not publicly funded programs).

Current pilot projects include: the extension of child care operating hours to evenings, weekends and overnight; the provision of child care services that meet the needs of parents who do on-call or part-time work, or who have rotating shifts; and the exploration of

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[23] Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance (2000). Translation. *Rapport annuel 1999/2000.*

alternative forms of child care, such as care in the child's home. The Ministry has set aside funding for these projects, and in certain cases allows them to depart from specific regulations. Each project, however, receives follow-up and evaluation in order to make the most of the experience. There is obviously a great deal of pressure for the system to diversify and respond better to the new realities of families with children of child care age.

Special clienteles

Underprivileged children

As access to $5-a-day spaces is not tied to the parents' professional status or income level, Québec's ECCE system is a truly universal program. However, despite the affordability of the fee level, some families do not have the means to pay $5-a-day per child, particularly those in which the parents earn a very low income or receive welfare payments. In such cases, parent fees are waived for up to 23 hours of child care per week, or even more on the recommendation of an authorized organization. Low-income families who access a $5-a-day space are eligible for additional compensation of $3 a day.

CPEs with a large number of underprivileged children are eligible for more than the basic level of funding generally available for operating child care. Those that implement special early intervention programs in low-income neighbourhoods are also eligible for a one-time subsidy to assist in adapting their program and activities to meet the special needs of this clientele, and to enable staff to participate in training activities and collaborate with other key professionals.

Children with disabilities

The government offers two kinds of help to CPEs in their decision on whether to accept children with special needs, and in finding the means to meet their responsibilities to these children and their families. One is Entrer dans la ronde, a publication on the inclusion in child care of children with special needs; the other is the Ministry subsidy available to centres to help them to include children *"with severe and long term disabililities, diagnosed as such by a recognised professional, who face obstacles in integrating into the child care setting."*[24] The subsidy is a non-recurring amount of $2,000 per child with an additional $21 per child per day of attendance. Apart from these two supports, the CPEs are generally on their own.[25] This no doubt explains why a relatively low percentage of children with disabilities regularly attend CPE centre-based or family child care.

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[24] Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance (2000). *Centres de la petite enfance: règles budgétaires pour l'année 2000/2001.*

[25] Before going to press, we learned that pilot projects on inclusion were being conducted by the Ministry with the collaboration of Office des personnes handicapees.

Aboriginal children

There are currently some 20 CPEs in First Nations or Inuit communities in Québec. Discussions are underway with some communities, notably the Kativik Regional Government, on delegating responsibility for funding programs and on transferring their management to the communities. A 40-space CPE in Kuujjuarapik, in northern Québec, offers Inuktitut-language services adapted to the needs of the northern population and the Inuit culture.

Children and families from ethnic communities

The MFE does not have a policy or program specifically geared towards integrating children and families from various ethnic communities, or whose mother tongue is not French.

IN CONCLUSION

It is clear that the government of Québec has chosen to ensure that the interests and well-being of children and their families remain at the centre of its family policy and of the early childhood care and education reform. The reform is indeed substantial and ambitious. It is gaining momentum and should be watched with enthusiasm, interest, caution and patience. Now that the first steps have been taken, we need to see how successful the Government and the MFE will be in reaching the objectives that will make early childhood education and care accessible and sensitive to the needs of a changing society.

Chapter 2

The early childhood agencies or CPEs (centre-based component)

INTRODUCTION

For the moment, child care services provided through the Centres de la Petite Enfance (CPEs) in Québec consist essentially of two forms of care: centre-based (child care centres) and family child care. In this chapter I discuss some of the issues specifically related to centre-based care.

In *You Bet I Care!* a recent study in Québec and Canada on wages, working conditions and practices in child care centres[26] for which data were collected in late Spring 1998, researchers asked directors to indicate the three most pressing problems their centre had faced during the past year. It should be remembered that the study was conducted in the early days of the Québec reform of early childhood care and education, at the time of the introduction of the early childhood agencies, or CPEs. In this chapter, I take a closer look at the issues raised by the directors in this study and attempt to establish whether the modifications to Québec's child care regime have helped to alleviate or perhaps even eliminate the difficulties mentioned or, on the contrary, may have served only to exacerbate them. I also examine some aspects of current CPE policies that give cause for concern.

Overview of the current context

Obligation to diversify

At the time of the *You Bet I Care!* study, non-profit child care centres had just undergone a change in status. They had become early childhood agencies or (CPEs), and were called upon to expand and diversify their services rapidly by adding spaces or additional child care centres and family child care. The managers and boards of directors were well acquainted with the world of the child care centre and its constituents, and felt relatively well prepared and comfortable as far as developing a second child care centre was concerned. However,

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[26] Doherty, G. Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on: Wages working conditions and practices in child care centres.* Centre for Work, Families and Well-Being, University of Guelph , Ontario.

developing family child care services did not elicit the same degree of enthusiasm. Many of them felt ill equipped to deal with the difficulties involved. The CPEs would have preferred to be able to diversify their services by using other child care formulae that more closely resembled that of the child care centre, such as drop-ins and nursery schools, or evening, night or weekend child care. Some adjustments would have been required but the centre-based option provided a framework with which the CPEs were already familiar and which they were confident of having mastered. However, the message from the Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance was clear: CPEs that offered the centre-based component were to diversify by developing family child care, and they were to do so before 2002.

New clienteles and numerous spaces to fill

The $5-a-day program had been introduced in September 1997. Although the program was implemented gradually and opened exclusively to 4-year-old children, the demand for spaces in CPEs had grown significantly. The spaces vacated by 5-year-olds enrolling in full-day kindergarten, and the newly created spaces already included in the 1997/1998 development plan had certainly not been difficult to fill; they had, however, generated unusually high attendance and a series of problems for which the child care centres had received no real support from the MFE. Applications for admission had come from all corners, but notably from middle-class parents who, until then, had stayed away from non-profit regulated child care because they could not afford the fees (given that they were not eligible for the financial exemption available to low-income families). These families took advantage of the lower fees by enrolling their 4-year-olds, and placed their younger children on waiting lists to ensure that they would have a space as soon as the $5-a-day program became available to other age groups. One can well imagine the administrative headache created by the arrival of these new families and the integration of the new children.

Budgetary nightmare

The financial management aspects of the changeover were enormously complicated. Government subsidies were accompanied by an assortment of transitional measures and provisions that were of such a degree of complexity that many of the CPEs were unable to determine their operating budget for the current year, and still less for the upcoming one. For example, directors were responsible for administering, on the one hand, the $5-a-day program for all 4-year-olds and, on the other, the financial exemption program for children under the age of 4 from low-income families. The MFE's approach to the system's implementation consisted of more improvization than planning. In fact, the Ministry, which was under a great deal of pressure as a result of the speed with which development was to take place, was not able to provide CPE administrative staff with the information and answers that would have permitted them to inform and reassure their boards of directors.

Implementation of the educational program

The CPEs were also required to implement the government's educational program. However, the majority of the CPEs already had educational programs and had organized their child care settings accordingly. Although the government program was based on recognized pedagogical principles and objectives that were already widespread in the field, child care centres nonetheless found themselves having to modify their mode of operation, reorganize their physical setting and provide teaching staff with training in order to meet the new educational program's requirements. And this was all to be done in such a way as not to disturb the children or diminish the quality of the care provided.

Observation of the regulations

Further, the tightening of child care teacher training regulations (two qualified teachers out of every three in the presence of the children 70% of the time, an increase from one qualified teacher in three) and their approaching implementation, the application of new teacher-child ratios (cf. Chapter 5), combined with the pressure of attempting to find qualified personnel in an extremely restricted labour pool, increased the frustration and stress experienced by many of the coordinators/directors. Indeed, according to the *You Bet I Care!* study[27] researchers, there are several reasons for believing that many directors experienced high levels of stress. Three-quarters of child care centre directors (76.6%) reported that they felt unable to accomplish all that they must do; almost half often felt physically exhausted at the end of the day, and one third often felt emotionally drained when they finish work.

Working conditions

Finally, it should be remembered that the salary adjustment[28] that affected all personnel did not occur until May 1999, one year after the reform's introduction and only after days of strikes and tight negotiations between the MFE, the Comité conjoint des centres de la petite enfance (CIRCPEQ and the Fédération des centres de la petite enfance du Québec), and the unions — the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) and the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ).

The most pressing problems

The sector was thus in a state of upheaval, and despite the fact that the vast majority of child care workers said that they were in favour of the government's measures to develop a universal ECCE system, and recognized its legitimacy, the problems were many and

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[27] Ibid., p. 67.

[28] An average 40% increase in salary representing an investment of more than $152 million over four years, with annual indexation, the application of job category salary scales for all personnel (teaching, administrative and support), and recognition of training and experience in the application of the scales.

persistent. The following list reflects the situation as it was perceived by CPE centre directors in the spring of 1998.

The most pressing problems reported by Québec child care centre directors in 1998 were:

- financial stability
- observation of the regulations
- staff training, finding and retaining qualified staff
- finding qualified substitute teaching staff
- concerns about the building and/or facilities
- staff salaries and benefits
- staff morale

Source: *You Bet I Care!* Study 1.

Financial stability

Earlier: In 1998, the median fee demanded of parents with children attending child care centres was in the neighbourhood of $450 per month. Approximately 40% of families were eligible for a fee subsidy[29] (this percentage does not include families with 4-year-old children who had gained a $5-a-day space by the time the *You Bet I Care!* data were collected). Even subsidized families had to pay a more or less substantial additional sum as the exemption varied and was calculated in terms of their income and the eligibility bracket; for example, for a single-parent family with one child the eligibility bracket was between $12,000 and $35,800 and for a two-parent family with two children it was between $16,800 and $40,300.[30] Other families – that is, close to 50% of families – were required to pay the full amount. Thus, child care centres could not afford to raise parent fees to increase revenue and, even if their revenue was not exclusively dependent on parent fees (at the time, 45.8% of child care centre revenue came from parent fees, 18.9% from fee subsidies and 33.0% from other government grants),[31] they were sufficiently dependent on them to be vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the local socio-economic context. Hence, the rate of seasonal unemployment, factory closures, low salaries and lay-offs in certain sectors, or a downturn in the local or regional economy were all factors that could affect child care centre occupancy rates. With 84.6% of their budget going towards salaries and employee benefits, centres had very little

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[29] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on: Wages, working conditions and practices in child care centres.*

[30] Childcare Resource and Research Unit (2000). *Early childhood care and education in Canada: Provinces and Territories 1998 – Québec.* On line: http://www.childcarecanada.org/pt98/pq/pq2.html.

[31] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on: Wages, working conditions and practices in child care centres.*

room to manoeuvre.[32] A drop in revenue due to a drop in attendance could result in serious financial problems.

Now: The ECCE reform came with its share of adjustments to CPE budgetary rules and financing. Without embarking on a detailed discussion of CPE financing for centres,[33] suffice it to say that, according to the administrators and key informants interviewed for this paper, after a four-year adjustment period during which the MFE, in consultation with the child care associations, adopted financing parameters which took into account the general needs of the sector, the CPEs' regular operating budgets have arrived at a relative equilibrium. The CPEs are no longer as vulnerable to the ups and downs of the economy or fluctuations in their occupancy rates; indeed, most of their budget (approximately 80%) now comes from government grants, and the popularity and affordability of the $5-a-day program are such that, for the most part, all available spaces are filled. Child care centres easily maintain an occupancy rate in excess of 80%, and therefore receive all their prescribed grants for the current fiscal year.

Clientele with special needs

Despite this notable improvement, it is nonetheless important to ask whether the operating grants awarded to CPEs are sufficient for them to serve their special needs clientele adequately. Given the affordability of regulated child care and the greater number of available spaces, it is safe to assume that CPEs receive an increased number of child care requests from families belonging to different cultural and linguistic communities, families whose children have disabilities or challenging behaviours, and socially, economically or emotionally disadvantaged families. Are CPEs in a position to accept these requests? And, if they accept, do they have the means to provide care that is adapted to the various needs?

Children with disabilities

Before discussing special clienteles for whom no additional financial aid is granted, let us consider children with disabilities. We know that there are specific grants for their care in Québec: an additional grant of $2,000, and $21 per day of occupancy on top of the regular operating grant. But is this aid sufficient to encourage CPE child care centres to integrate such children into their regular program?

In 1998, the *You Bet I Care!* researchers were encouraged by the relatively high number of child care centres Canada-wide (70%) that accepted children with special needs (an

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[32] Ibid.

[33] All calculation procedures, terms and conditions can be found in the document published by the MFE entitled *Les règles budgétaires pour l'année 2000/2001.*

average of 2.5 children per child care centre).[34] According to MFE data,[35] this percentage in Québec in 1998/99 was only 36.3%.[36] Unfortunately, the MFE has not compiled official data for 2000 and 2001 on child care centre attendance by children with disabilities, so it has not been possible to examine progress or fluctuations. However, the person responsible for the portfolio at the MFE[37] confirmed that, at best, there had been no change in the situation. Thus, there appears to be no more children with disabilities in CPE child care centres now than in 1999, and this despite an increase in financial aid over former years, more spaces being available, and what one may presume to be higher demand.

The principal reasons cited by a significant proportion of the directors in Canada who participated in the *You Bet I Care!* study to explain their refusal to accept children with special needs were the lack of funds needed to hire additional staff, and the structural modifications that their building would require for which they did not have the money. It is reasonable to assume that the same reasons hold true for Québec. Integrating children with special needs is not solely a question of money; it also requires open-mindedness on the part of the staff and a strong desire to do so. The fact remains, however, that CPEs require additional financial and human resources if they are to integrate a greater number of children with disabilities.

Children with challenging behaviours

Let us now consider children who display challenging behaviours but who do not correspond as such to the definition of a "disabled" child used by the MFE to determine admissibility for grants. It seems that more and more child care workers claim that a growing number of children present challenging behaviours of sufficient severity to disturb the entire group, although it is unclear whether this is indeed the case or simply an impression. Child care workers feel ill equipped to deal with this problem. Indeed, this is reflected in the *You Bet I Care!* Study in which more than 75% of participating child care teachers and directors stated that their work would be that much more satisfying if child care centres which accepted children with special needs and challenging behaviours were provided with more resources and support.[38] Moreover, the first choice of the directors and teachers for professional development activities is for those that concern intervention with challenging behaviours.[39]

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[34] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on: Wages, working conditions and practices in child care centres*, p. 122.
[35] Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance, *Rapport Annuel 1998/1999*.
[36] 441 CPE and non-CPE child care centres out of 1,214 integrated 1,080 children with disabilities.
[37] Johanne Gauthier.
[38] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on: Wages, working conditions and practices in child care centres*, p. 93.
[39] Ibid. pp. 44, 59.

To be able to intervene adequately with children who pose particular challenges, and to ensure that their presence enriches rather than disrupts the experience of the other children, CPEs need to be able to arrange their space, groups, programs, and even their ratios. They also need to provide support for their staff and ensure that they are adequately equipped. They need to establish intervention plans calling for the participation of the parents and health professionals. However, the CPEs' regular operating budgets do not take into account these "special needs".

Children from different cultural and linguistic communities, and children from disadvantaged families

The affordability and increased amount of child care available throughout Québec are two factors that have made child care eminently more accessible to many families who, in the past, made do without. It is reasonable to assume that greater numbers of immigrant and refugee families, and families who are disadvantaged in various ways are also likely to want their children to attend CPEs. True integration of these children depends on inclusive approaches being aimed at the children, of course, but also at their families. CPE staff must be trained accordingly and have access to resources that enable them to intervene appropriately. The CPEs' regular budget does not provide this degree of flexibility. Thus, CPEs must find the resources they require in their community, and if local resources are inadequate or poorly adapted, they are left to their own devices. Given these circumstances, one cannot really say that they are able to accept and integrate such children; this situation poses serious problems for a society that wishes and claims to be open and accepting of other cultures.

Staff salaries, working conditions and employee benefits

Earlier: The question of early childhood educator salaries was discussed in Chapter 1. We saw that, all categories combined, the average salary of teachers in 1998 was $10.98 an hour, for an average annual salary of $20 667 – only slightly more than that earned by a parking lot attendant. As for directors, their earnings average $15.73 an hour, even though no fewer than 38.2% of them possess a B.A. or higher degree.[40]

But what of the working conditions in centre-based settings in 1998? We know that in 1998 child care staff, like directors for that matter, gave a reported average of one full day of unpaid time to their child care centre per week; that their work status was often precarious (approximately 18% of them were casual employees and 14% were on contract); that, taking inflation into account, their purchasing power had shown virtually no increase since 1991,

[40] Ibid., p. 54.

despite their higher level of educational achievement; and that fewer than 25% of teaching staff had a pension plan.[41]

We also know that conditions in CPEs varied from one place to the next and there were significant differences across Québec, even though the work and responsibilities remained the same. Table 2.2, which is based on data taken from an MFE survey of CPEs conducted in March 1999, provides an overview of the disparities noted at the time.

TABLE 2.1 : HOURLY WAGE DISTRIBUTION BY JOB CATEGORY, NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED AND YEARS OF SENIORITY, 1999.

	administrators	management assistants	educational consultants	child care teachers, total	trained child care teachers	untrained child care teachers
Percentile						
10	14.09	10.22	10.25	9.00	9.58	8.05
20	15.00	11.25	11.50	10.0010.47	8.79	
30	16.00	12.49	12.06	10.7011.15	9.40	
40	16.87	13.48	12.68	11.3811.84	9.91	
50	17.50	14.01	13.11	12.0612.49	10.46	
60	18.19	14.97	13.75	12.7013.00	11.13	
70	19.25	15.30	14.45	13.3513.56	12.00	
80	20.29	16.28	15.00	14.0014.24	12.75	
90	22.06	18.03	16.10	14.9915.02	14.00	
Mean number of hours	35.027.1	28.5	32.4	33.3	29.3	
Years of seniority	9.1	5.5	3.7	7.8	8.3	5.9

The vast majority of CPEs had very little room to manoeuvre to increase salaries and improve staff working conditions because such improvements would have had the immediate effect of raising parent fees. It became increasingly difficult to attract candidates interested in the profession and to keep them.

This was the context in which teachers and support staff belonging to the FSSS–CSN union spearheaded the charge, going on strike in April 1999, and mobilizing, along with FIPEQ-CEQ child care workers, to demand that the government intervene and grant them decent wages and more satisfactory working conditions, pay equity and an equitable pension

[41] Ibid., Chapter 6.

plan. In many cases, non-unionized CPE child care centres and family child care homes joined the movement, adopting their colleagues' demands. Two days of general strikes (April 1 and 8, 1999), two demonstrations in Montréal and Québec City mobilizing more than 4,000 people from all regions of the province, the occupation of the offices of the Minister of Finance and the threat of an indefinite general strike (April 20, 1999) led to the creation by the MFE of an advisory working group composed of representatives from CPE boards of directors, unions and the Ministry. The group's mandate was to develop and submit recommendations on wages, a pension plan, pay equity and the funding mechanisms of the CPEs.[42]

The recommendations made by the working group were adopted by the government and resulted in:

- the creation of a committee to evaluate the feasibility of implementing a pension plan (on which a report was to be tabled January 1, 2000);
- the creation of a committee to evaluate pay equity conditions applicable to workers in the sector;
- the establishment of a salary scale and career ladder taking into account workers' levels of educational achievement and relevant experience;
- the recognition and transferability of child care workers' relevant experience from one CPE to another; and
- greater salary readjustments for the less well paid employees in the various job categories.

Now: All the people interviewed for the purposes of this paper stressed the decisive and positive impact of the pay readjustment and pay scale for all job categories in the sector. These lifted the troops' morale, and the teaching staff undertook implementation of the educational program with renewed vigour. There was a noticeable revival of interest in the profession, its practices and code of ethics, and an extraordinary degree of participation in professional development activities. Child care associations saw requests for specialized training in management, planning and programming multiply. Cégeps (colleges)[43] also witnessed an increase in enrolment in the ECCE certificate and diploma program.[44]

As we have seen, staff salaries account for approximately 80% of a CPE-based child care centre's budget. A pension plan and part of the resulting costs would in all likelihood be

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[42] Comité conjoint des CPE du Québec/Groupe de travail consultatif , May 7, 1999.
[43] Collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel, Québec's general and vocational colleges.
[44] Interviews with Micheline Lalonde-Gratton (researcher and professor at UQAM), Claudette Pitre-Robin (Director of the Regroupement des CPE de la Montérégie), Natalie Bigras (professor at the Cégep de St-Hyacynthe).

taken care of by the government, as is the sector's group insurance plan. This means that, to all intents and purposes, approximately 20% of the CPE's budget can be put towards: (1) giving the centre its distinct flavour – providing employees with a series of benefits (e.g. paid breaks, paid preparation time, compensation for meetings held outside operating hours) and working conditions (staffing policies, written job descriptions and contracts, a room reserved for staff use only, etc.), factors that distinguish the the centres from one another; as well as (2) creating and arranging a setting that promotes child development while supporting the adults who work in it; and (3) implementing an educational program that stimulates the children while making full use of staff members' knowledge and expertise.

The introduction of a uniform career ladder and pay scale applicable to all of Québec's CPEs, and the recognition of relevant staff experience and of the transferability of such experience from one CPE to another, has had an effect on staff turnover. Employees who are dissatisfied with benefits or working conditions in a specific centre, or who do not have an ideal working relationship with management or their colleagues were in the past more or less obliged to remain where they were because of the significant drop in salary resulting from loss of seniority with a move to another CPE. These employees now have the possibility of changing jobs in search of better benefits and working conditions or a more agreeable work environment without fear of being penalized financially. If, in the short term, one may deplore this type of staff turnover, in the medium and long term, one should be pleased because the relationships and interaction between the children and staff members will undoubtedly improve as the staff experience a greater degree of job satisfaction – identified by *You Bet I Care!* researchers as one of the factors directly associated with the quality of care.[45]

Observing the regulations; recruiting, keeping and training staff; recruiting substitutes

Earlier: Before the introduction of the new family policy, before the accelerated development of ECCE services and the recognition of the fundamental role they play in the development of children and their later success in school, before the pay readjustment, and the pension plan and pay equity discussions, and before the CPEs were assigned a key role in the social economy's framework, child care was evidently not one of the most appealing careers. As might have been predicted, the best candidates chose careers in other child-related fields that were more professionally satisfying because they offered better opportunities for advancement, superior working conditions, more generous salaries, or received greater recognition. Even when qualified staff were successfully recruited, turnover could reach 17%.

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[45] Goelman, H., Doherty, G., Lero, D., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in child care centres across Canada.* Centre for Work, Families and Well-Being, University of Guelph, Ontario.

Many of these people, approximately 26%, simply abandoned the child care field outright. Often, those who did so were the best qualified and had the most experience.[46]

With the introduction of the reform, the government had decreed a tightening of teaching staff training regulations. This measure was to take effect in September 1999 and required all CPEs to ensure that two out of every three child care teachers were qualified. In 1998, the CPEs were incapable of respecting this norm, hence the directors' concerns. Salaries had not yet been readjusted; the massive promotional campaign launched by the government and the Association des enseignantes et enseignants en techniques d'éducation en services de garde had not yet taken place; and awareness of the role and the importance of early childhood care and education in the lives of children, their families, and society in general was only just beginning to make its way into the public consciousness. If it was not easy to recruit teaching staff, it was not any easier to motivate the existing teaching staff to go back to school to further their professional development or to obtain the required certificate or diploma. Why would they have done so? It would not have had any significant effect on their salary or working conditions and, in any case, given the lack of interest in the profession, there was ample employment in the field on the one hand, and the frenetic growth of the sector, on the other.

Across Canada – and one may assume the situation in Québec to have been the same – the percentage of child care teachers having participated in professional development activities had fallen dramatically between 1991 and 1998. In 1998, 23.8% of child care teachers had not participated, compared to 13.0% in 1991. For the *You Bet I Care!* researchers, this meant that child care teachers were not remedying their lack of basic training in ECCE with a good in-service training program.[47]

Now: Circumstances have changed since 1998. Early childhood care and education is a given in Québec. It is one of the cornerstones of the Québec government's family policy, has become eminently affordable and is, in the minds of the Québécois, an essential right of all families. The notion of universality in ECCE is wending its way into Québec's collective unconscious. With the pay readjustment and all the publicity surrounding the CPEs, people who work in the sector have risen in public estimation. More candidates have been admitted to college-level programs in ECCE over the past two years and it is reported, almost all available positions are successfully filled – and with new recruits and existing child care workers in the process of completing the required training, at that. It should be noted

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[46] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on: Wages, working conditions and practices in child care centres across Canada*, Chapter 8.
[47] Ibid., p. 47.

however, that the MFE has postponed enforcement of teaching staff educational norms once again so that the CPEs were granted until September 2001 to meet the requirements.

About the educational requirements

Let us come back to the issue of training requirements for early childhood educators now. Two out of every three teachers must hold at least a two- or three-year college diploma (DEC) in ECCE, or have completed all of the ECCE courses included in the three-year ECCE diploma. Individuals with a university degree in a relevant field must complete their training with courses on young children and health. Individuals with a one-year ECCE certificate – some 800 hours – are also considered to be qualified if this training is coupled with three years of full-time experience or the equivalent in duties involving work with a group of pre-school children in child care, in health or social services or in a school environment.[48]

We should keep in mind that experts consider the minimum requirement for an individual to acquire the basic competencies for work in a child care centre to be at least two years of college-level ECCE training.[49] In addition to the campaign to attract new candidates at the college diploma level, the government, in collaboration with Travail Québec and the cégeps (colleges) has set up a certificate-level professional development program that is geared primarily to people who have already been working in the field for at least three years. The cégeps (colleges) have developed accelerated programs of slightly more than 900-hours that cover the basic ECCE curriculum.

However, according to some key informants interviewed for this paper, it appears that the work experience of many of the candidates enrolled in this certificate course may not be truly relevant. Under pressure to meet the demand for qualified staff, the cégeps have in fact admitted students whose prior work experience consisted, for example, of having been a playground leader or babysitter. Furthermore, there is some question as to the qualifications of the teachers hired by the cégeps to provide the training. Indeed, the teaching staff hired by cégeps for adult education programs often do not possess a university degree.

Without ascertaining the accuracy of these statements, or passing judgement on the quality of the individuals enrolled or teaching in these programs, suffice it to say that many people in the field question the value of the 900-hour certificate. One detects a fear that early childhood educators, whom one might suppose to be qualified, would not have had the time to develop the skills or acquire the knowledge necessary to carry out their duties properly. Given that the quality of care rests largely on the child care workers' shoulders, if this is indeed the case, one can understand their concern.

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[48] National Assembly of Québec (1997). *Regulation Respecting Childcare Centres*

[49] Pence, A.R. and S. Griffin, *A window of opportunity: Building the ladder*, in Interaction, Vol. 5 (1991), p. 29.

Proposal for accelerating the child care teacher training process

Moreover, still with an eye to accelerating the training of candidates wishing to work in the sector, cégeps are examining the possibility of developing yet another certificate in ECCE of approximately 1,800 hours (all of the ECCE-specific courses of the existing college level diploma (DEC) without the electives) and recognizing it on a par with the DEC. ECCE trainers are opposed to this initiative, considering the offer of cut-rate diplomas to be inappropriate, and holding that such a measure could render the DEC to all intents and purposes obsolete. On the other hand, certain individuals in the sector believe that the new certificate could serve as an acceptable transitional measure, making it possible for CPEs to conform with the regulations, even if this may, in a few years time, mean requiring early childhood educators to participate in professional development activities to complete their training. However, it should be kept in mind that transitional measures adopted to solve short-term problems unfortunately have a tendency to become entrenched and, eventually, the norm.

The issue of substitute teachers

Given the requirement that two qualified teachers out of every three must be with the children 70% of the time, it is clear that hiring people to replace regular CPE staff on maternity, sick or deferred leave, or participating in professional development activities, is highly problematic. The lack of qualified staff means that the CPEs do not really have a pool of teaching staff in reserve upon whom they can call. Circumstances often force them to provide child care services even when they are unable to conform to the regulations.

Director training

The regulations are very clear concerning the responsibilities incumbent on the person responsible for managing the CPE – the director:

> *that person acts under the authority of the board of directors; she/he shall be in charge of the management, planning, organization, direction, monitoring and evaluation of the centre's programs and resources.*[50]

The regulations assign her responsibility for informing and liaising with the board of directors, parents and external organizations, for seeing to the application of the educational child care program, for participating in the preparation of the budget and undertaking a regular follow-up of it. However, no general or specialized training is required to be a CPE director in Québec. This incongruity is undoubtedly the source of a large number of management-related difficulties encountered by CPEs as they develop and diversify, and of

[50] National Assembly of Québec (1997). *Regulation Respecting Childcare Centres.*

the stress and dissatisfaction experienced by directors confronted with tasks and responsibilities for which they do not necessarily possess the requisite skills or knowledge. The directors themselves, when asked what qualifications they should have, considered that they should at least hold a college diploma in ECCE, if not a university degree in the field, and stressed the importance of taking child care management courses.[51] However, according to an in-depth study of the child care sector's human resources, in 1998 there were only 11 child care management certificate programs in all of Canada, including a new experimental program at the Cégep de St-Jérôme. The Université du Québec à Montréal has since developed a program for CPE administrators[52] but these programs are essentially destined for individuals working in the Greater Montréal region.

Child care organizations, notably the national and regional associations, have fortunately taken it upon themselves to fill this gap. They play a significant role in training directors who, if they reside outside Montréal, are for the moment on their own in searching out the training and professional development activities they require. Over the past few years, these organizations have developed a series of courses targeting the administrators' most pressing needs in terms of programs, human resources and financial management. The MFE has moreover recognized that they serve this function, awarding them grants of up to $50,000 annually.

But let us return briefly to the importance of courses specific to child care management. Several studies have shown a significant correlation between the quality of child care services and the fact that the director had specialized training in ECCE and child care administration.[53] In 1998, in Québec, 47.8% of directors had no ECCE-related training. Although 15% of centre directors possessed a college diploma in ECCE, and 25% a university degree or higher qualification related to ECCE,[54] given that these programs include little course work on administration as such, a large number of the directors were evidently poorly equipped to deal with the new challenges presented by their profession. When managing a 60-space child care centre with a relatively small team of child care teachers and a limited budget, a good understanding of the field, a solid board of directors and experience could to a certain extent compensate for a lack of training. For that matter, in 1998, 62.5% of Québec directors had over 10 years of experience in the field.[55] But with the advent of the CPEs and

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[51] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on: Wages, working conditions and practices in child care centres*, p. 68.

[52] Beach, J., Bertrand, J. and Cleveland, G. (1998). *Our childcare workforce: From recognition to remuneration. More than a labour of love.* Main Report, p. 108. Ottawa.

[53] Helburn, S.W. (1995). *Cost, quality, and child outcomes in child care centres*, Denver, Colorado, University of Denver, Department of Economy, Centre of Research and Social Policy; and Jorde Bloom, P., *The child care director: A critical component of program quality.* Educational Horizons (Spring 1992), pp. 138–145.

[54] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on: Wages, working conditions and practices in child care centres*, p. 57.

[55] Ibid. p. 60

the new mandate given them, if administrators wished to remain at the helm of these new "socio-educational" organizations and participate in their development, they had no choice but to keep themselves up-to-date with principal trends in early childhood education and to train themselves in the management of social economy businesses.

Generational conflicts

An aspect of the training issue that is rarely discussed concerns what one key informant described as a generational conflict. The massive influx of young early childhood educators holding ECCE-related degrees, college diplomas or certificates, and schooled in the new pedagogy has somewhat upset the calm comfort in which some of the older child care workers had taken refuge. They had gained their training through experience and practice and made do without professional development activities over the past decade because, as we have seen, the activities were either too expensive or did not suit them, the distance to travel was too great, or they simply did not have the time. The fact remains that they are now confronted daily with motivated and qualified young women for whom formal training is an essential given; young women who sometimes question the pedagogical approaches in use, considering them to be outdated or frankly unacceptable; young women who prefer more structured intervention and are at ease in a hierarchical environment in which each child care worker has a clearly defined role and knows her place in the structure. The child care workers of the older generation, especially those who toed the line and hoped to continue quietly until their retirement, feel harassed and are not ready to hand everything over to these newcomers who, though indisputably well-intentioned, nonetheless lack experience and knowledge. The older teachers' hard-won rights are important to them, and they object to having "the way things are done" questioned. The adaptation of the one group and the integration of the other is proving to be neither simple nor easy and conflicts are inevitable. CPE administrators must quickly give this problem their full attention or the work atmosphere, so essential to the quality of care, will rapidly become unbearable.

Building- and facility-related concerns

Earlier: We have seen that 80% or more of child care centre budgets are earmarked for staff salaries, and approximately 10% for fixed expenses. This leaves only 10% for purchasing material and equipment, and for the educational program. Thus, all child care centres, especially long-standing ones, were ripe for major repairs in 1998, repairs that had been continuously put off because funds were lacking or priorities were elsewhere. Furthermore, in many cases, implementation of the new educational program required structural modifications to the physical space.

Budgetary provisions were unclear: nothing was known at the time about regulations governing development and capital expenditure grants, especially those concerning the undertaking or overseeing of a development project, purchasing a property or constructing, expanding, or renovating a child care centre, or carrying out leasehold improvements. CPEs themselves did not know exactly where they stood financially or what the future held for them. In view of these uncertainties, directors were extremely reluctant to involve their organizations in substantial building expenses. Boards of directors were no more keen. At the same time, everyone clearly understood what the growth and diversification of CPE services would imply. In a short period of time – three years at most – they would be obliged to manage one, perhaps two, centres and an entire network of family child care homes. That meant having to plan to expand, move or even build a new building – a heavy burden to assume in the context of all the other responsibilities accompanying the reform.

Now: What has become apparent after four years is that the child care sector has rapidly adapted to meet the demands of the change. Contrary to popular opinion, the sector's ability to develop new services exceeds the government's expansion plan. Indeed, development projects are coming in from all parts of the sector, from already-established CPEs and from new sponsor groups. This, we believe, is the result of the greater transparency of budgetary provisions, the effort to achieve coherence in policies and programs, the evident political will and, especially, the remarkable dynamism of child care centres and community groups concerned with issues affecting children and families. The CPEs, their staff and their boards of directors feel that they have an obligation to meet the demand of the numerous parents waiting for a space at $5 a day. It is up to them to ensure that the system grows, and that it does so rapidly. They have pulled out all the stops. Some directors have been unable to find the staffing or professional resources they need to meet these new challenges and to transform themselves into the executive director of a medium-sized business; they have had to vacate their position, sometimes with regret and under difficult conditions. Overall, however, the vast majority of the directors of the old child care centres were ready for the CPE adventure. According to several well-informed sources, the directors now show increasing confidence in manning their ships.[56]

Staff morale

Staff morale was a pressing problem in 1998 but it seems that the upheaval in the sector has changed this situation. As we have seen, the profession has gained recognition, jobs in the field are plentiful, possibilities for career advancement are expanding, salaries have improved (another adjustment is planned for 2003), and a pension plan is in the air, as is pay

[56] Conclusions drawn primarily from statements made by Claudette Pitre-Robin, Vice-President of Concertaction and Francine Lessard, Executive Director of the Fédération des Centres de la Petite Enfance du Québec.

equity (November 2001). The CPEs are in the process of implementing an educational program that speaks to the child care workers and calls for their active participation in the process. Those working in the field feel appreciated and believe that their knowledge and skills are being put to good use. They are supported in their belief that they make a difference in children's lives. Indeed, these feelings are among the principal factors associated with having a "good job" according to the general public.[57] The child care teachers' newfound celebrity has brought with it an increased sense of responsibility and a true feeling of pride. Many CPEs have embarked on the process of providing themselves with a code of ethics for their day-to-day child care practice.[58] Nowadays, teachers working in the CPE centres appear to have the wind in their sails, while barely four years ago their morale was at rock bottom. They still work just as hard, put in long hours, and do not have the best salary in the world but the fact that they are appreciated and that the importance of their work is recognized allows them to stay on course and persevere in a profession that is as demanding as it is rewarding.

IN CONCLUSION

The most pressing problems raised by Québec directors in 1998 concerned:

- regulations, especially those concerning training requirements;
- child care financing, especially financial instability, salaries and working conditions, and the physical environment;
- administration, especially staffing issues: recruiting and keeping staff;
- staff feelings, especially morale and the level of job satisfaction.

The overlap between these issues and the categories and direct and indirect predictors of child care quality identified in the *You Bet I Care!* study is most revealing and explains why it was and still is important to address them.

TABLE 2.2: DIRECT AND INDIRECT PREDICTORS OF CHILD CARE QUALITY

Regulable	Staff member' level of ECCE-specific education
	Adult/child ratio
	Auspice

[57] Canadian Policy Research Networks (2001). *Final Report of CPRN Project on Re-Thinking Employment Relationships*. http://lists.magma.ca:8080/T/A17.44.157.2.3278.

[58] Here, we should give special mention to the initiative of the Regroupement des Centres de la Petite Enfance de la Montérégie, which published a code of ethics for CPE teachers and teaching staff.

Financial	Staff wage level
	Subsidized rent and/or utilities
	Level of full-time fees
Administrative	Centre is used as a student-teacher practicum site
	Number of adults in the group
Attitudinal	Staff satisfaction with their work environment and relationships with colleagues

Source: Goelman, H. et al. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in child care centres across Canada,* (Study 2 of *You Bet I Care)* Table 6.5, p. 79.

There are obviously other issues that would have been interesting to examine in this chapter and that present their share of difficulties and challenges for the CPE, but because they are also of equal concern for family child care and, by extension, for school age child care, I have chosen to leave their discussion until the final chapter of this report. Thus, in Chapter 5, I shall consider the six following issues: training and ratios, the lack of a male presence, the commercial sector, the status of family child care providers, parental participation and community-based small and medium-size businesses.

3

The early childhood agencies or CPEs (family child care component)

INTRODUCTION

Here I explore family child care and the reasons behind the government's decision to encourage the expansion of this sector and make it the cornerstone of Québec's child care system. I also examine some of the pitfalls related to this policy. Finally, I discuss family child care providers, and what can be done to ensure that their child care services are recognized and appreciated, and given a prominent role in Québec's non-profit child care system.

At first glance

Family child care coordinated by early childhood agencies (CPEs) is central to the short- and medium-term development of the early childhood care and education system in Québec. Concomitantly with its announcement of the creation of the CPEs and the expansion of the ECCE system in 1997, the government of Québec published a nine-year development plan for the period 1997 to 2006. On examining Tables 3.1 and 3.2,[59] one is struck by the speed with which the government planned to develop the two child care settings. A total of 92,500 new spaces were to be developed, of which 55,600 were to be in family child care (an increase of 73.25%) and 36,900 in child care centres (an increase of 37.88%).

After almost four years of implementation, family child care has indeed been developed more rapidly than centre-based care. The family child care sector has grown by 64.86%. This compares with growth in centre-based care of 19.61%. There were 60,536 spaces in centre-based care on March 31, 1997, and 75,305 on December 31, 2000; there were 20,328 spaces in family child care on March 31, 1997, and 54,254 on December 31, 2000).

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[59] Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance (1998). *Communiqué de presse, 1er avril 1998.* On line: http://www.famille-enfance.gouv.qc.ca/c_presse/c980401a.htm.

TABLE 3.1 PROPOSED NEW SPACES

	1997/ 1998	1998/ 1999	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005 2006	Total
Centre-based										
No. of spaces	1,800	5,900	5,200	4,300	4,400	4,600	4,700	3,900	2,100	36,900
Family child care										
No. of spaces	1,300	8,800	12,900	9,000	7,500	7,500	7,500	900	200	55,600
Total										
No. of spaces	3,100	14,700	18,100	13,300	11,900	12,100	12,200	4,800	2,300	92,500

TABLE 3.2 PROJECTED GROWTH OF THE NETWORK CENTRE-BASED AND FAMILY CHILD CARE

	1997/8	1998/9	1999/2000	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/5	2005/6
Centre-based									
No. of spaces	62,336	68,200	73,400	77,700	82,100	86,700	91,400	95,300	97,400
Growth (%)	8 65	7 08	5 53	5.35	5 30	5.14	4.09	2 15	
Family child care									
No. of spaces	21,628	30,400	43,300	52,300	59,800	67,300	74,800	75,700	75,900
Growth (%)	6 01	28 94	29.79	17.20	12 54	11 14	10 02	1 18	0 26
Total									
No. of spaces	83,964	98,600	116,700	130,000	141,900	154,000	166,200	171,000	173,300
Growth (%)	3 69	14 90	15.50	10.23	8 38	7.85	7.34	2 80	1 32

Why has the Québec government chosen to give priority to the development of family child care?

Parental preference

The government's answer to this question would be that the choice was made first and foremost in response to the preferences expressed by parents. It should be noted that, at the same time as the government announced the expansion of the child care system and the creation of the CPEs, it also made a point of stressing that ECCE in no way replaces parents. On the contrary, it supports them in their parental role and should, as far as possible, match parental choices.

A study conducted by Québec's statistical office (BSQ) on families' child care needs revealed that *"parents in Québec prefer family child care for their younger children while centre-based care is preferred for children three years and older."*[60] It is interesting to note that, although

[60] Bureau de la statistique du Québec (1999). Translation. *Enquête sur les besoins des familles en matière de services de garde*. Éditeur officiel du Québec, p. 40.

parents expressed a definite preference for child care in the child's home for children under the age of 2 (half of all parents), to date this particular child care arrangement has been given no consideration in Québec's child care policy (see Appendix A for a discussion of parents' expressed preference for family child care.

TABLE 3.3: PARENTAL PREFERENCE ACCORDING TO AGE OF CHILDREN, 1999.

Age Group	% Centre-based child care	% Family child care
Less than 1 year old	15.9	79.3
1 to under 2 years old	22.5	73.9
2 years old	38.6	58.4
3 years old	57.6	40.1
4 years old	69.3	28.9

This, then, was the context for the government's decision to focus on the development of spaces in family child care; in 1997, when the reform was launched, there were far fewer spaces in family than in centre-based child care – roughly 20,000 in the former compared to 58,000 in the latter.

It costs less and can be developed more rapidly

In order to ensure public support for an initiative of such scope as the child care reform, the government was and is, of course, obliged to consider the early child care and education preferences of the parents. In fact, it is particularly fortunate that so many parents stated a preference for family child care, as it is also the type of care that is the least expensive to develop and the quickest to develop in the current context because it has an already well-established infrastructure.

As mentioned above, in 1998, 28.2% of the children between the ages of 0 and 12 who were regularly cared for by a person other than their parents attended a family child care home that was not coordinated by a CPE; this has the equivalence of 76,700 spaces.[61] Knowing that a non-regulated family child care provider looks after, on average, 4.1 children,[62] we can conclude with a fair degree of certainty that Québec in 1998 possessed a pool of 18,700 family child care providers who could potentially enter the regulated system.

[61] To obtain this figure, we applied a simple rule of three. In 1998, 8% of all children between the ages of 0 and 12 attended CPE-coordinated family child care. At the time, the research counted a total of 21,761 spaces in family child care. 8.% = 21,761 and 28.2% = 76,700.

[62] Canadian Child Care Federation (1998). *Providing home child care for a living: A survey of providers working in the unregulated sector in their own home*, Table 4.1. CCCF (Ottawa).

Obviously, CPE supervision, support and control of child care generates certain costs, as does subsidization of the providers for spaces at the reduced rate. But the government does not at present subsidize providers for building costs or capital investments, equipment, supplies, rent and mortgage, nor for running a family child care home as such. Such expenses are entirely the responsibility of the provider and must of course be taken into account when determining the cost of a family child care. We will take a closer look at this later on. The government, however, does not have to consider such expenses when drawing up its development and financing plan, as it does in planning spaces in centre-based care. Thus, creating spaces in family child care costs the government less than in centre-based care.

It is evident that, as long as the informal family child care providers who were already working in the field agreed to join the regulated system, the CPEs would benefit from a situation that favoured the rapid growth of their family child care component.

Capitalizing on the available labour force

Parental aspirations

Many parents, if they have the financial means, choose to stay at home at the birth of a child to look after their newborn. Indeed, 42% of all births in 1997 resulted in maternity and parental leaves.[63] Since then, the governments of Québec and Canada have decided to improve further on their respective maternity and parental leave benefits in response to parents' wishes, and to make leave more universally accessible. Despite these improvements, however, it is well known that families in which one of the parents or the sole parent decides to stay at home to look after the children incur significant short- and long-term financial losses, especially if this arrangement extends over several years.[64]

When researchers asked family child care providers what had motivated them to become family child care providers, while the love of children and desire to work with them was the most frequently cited reason (68.0%), looking for a way to earn an income while caring for their own children ran a close second (66.2%)[65]. One can assume that many family child care providers see family child care as a way to guard against financial losses, to earn a living and to provide for their family's needs while having the opportunity to care for and

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[63] Childcare Resource and Research Unit (2000). *Early childhood care and education in Canada: Provinces and Territories 1998* – Québec. On line: http://www.childcarecanada.org/pt98/pq/pq2.html.

[64] Cleveland, G. and Krashinsky, M. (1998). *The benefits and costs of good child care: The economic rationale for public investment in young children* – A Policy Study. University of Toronto at Scarborough, Chapter 1.

[65] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., Tougas, J., LaGrange, A. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in child care centres across Canada:* Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being, University of Guelph, Ontario, Table 4.5.

educate their own children. According to the *You Bet I Care!* study data, 29.9% of all family child care providers have at least one child at home who is age 5 or younger.[66] Thus, in promoting the development of family child care, the government is simply aligning itself with a current trend. It is a way of reconciling the parents' wishes with government policies.

Back-to-work strategy

In 1996, 64.3% of single-parent mothers with children under the age of 6 were not active in the paid workforce, and these families were among the poorest in Québec. Following the example of other governments, Québec examined an array of measures promoting back-to-work strategies for such mothers. I will not discuss here the appropriateness, relevance or legitimacy of the various measures proposed by the Québec government in this regard; I simply wish to point out that family child care was one of the employment options selected by the government to help these families better their situation and allow mothers receiving welfare to gradually move back into the workforce. It should be noted that in 2000, 44.8% of single-parent mothers were active in the workforce, compared to 35.7% in 1996.

A solution for small municipalities and rural communities

Family child care in Québec, whether or not it is coordinated by a CPE, is more widespread than centre-based care in regions where families are spread out over a large area rather than being concentrated in medium-sized or large cities. Thus, in 1998, 54.1% of Québécois children in small municipalities or villages attended family child care, while on the Island of Montreal, for example, only 22.1% did so. In medium and large cities, the proportions are 38.2% and 37.3% respectively.[67]

Rural communities and small municipalities that are far from large urban centres have relatively far-flung populations, as well as seasonal employment – fishing, agriculture, forestry, tourism – when they do not face unemployment and welfare. Thus, even if a child care centre could be demonstrated as viable in a regional area, family child care offers certain undeniable advantages, particularly in its flexibility and decentralized care. Furthermore, the *Enquête sur les besoins des familles en matière de services de garde* shows that, for all age groups together, family child care is the preferred mode of care among parents, but it is the most popular in small municipalities and villages.[68]

Why did the Québec government decide to place family child care under the CPEs?

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[66] Ibid., Table 3.3.

[67] Bureau de la statistique du Québec (1999). *Enquête sur les besoins des familles en matière de services de garde*, Figure 3.1.2.

[68] Ibid., Chapter 1.

Once the decision was made to make family child care the cornerstone of the short- and medium-term development of Québec's ECCE system, and given the eminently private nature of this form of child care, it was necessary for the government to determine the auspices under which family child care services should be placed within the system, finding an acceptable compromise at the boundary between the non-profit and commercial child care sectors.

To give them community-based status

As we have seen, the Québec government refused from the beginning to allow the market to be the sole determinant of the development of ECCE services – a decision supported and illustrated by the massive injection of public funds into the sector and the priority given to community-based programs. However, it cannot be denied that each and every family child care home is a small independent business, managed by one person who draws her income directly from the child care services rendered. In some cases, the family child care home is a small business with an employee who acts as an assistant to the child care provider and owner.[69]

CPEs – independent, non-profit umbrella organizations – confer community-based status on the family child care homes they oversee and coordinate, as did the family child care agencies before them. Through the CPEs, regulated family child care homes become part of the government's ECCE development plan. The subsidized spaces allotted family child care providers result from decisions made at a regional level in a context of open dialogue among stakeholders. The CPEs are among the stakeholders; it is through them that the family child are providers have a say – as opposed to commercial child care centres who are represented at the table by their owners.

The family child care programs that come under the CPEs receive government support for spaces at the reduced rate ($5 a day parent fees), and additional funds for looking after infants and children with disabilities. It is up to the CPE to see to it that public funds are used in accordance with the law and regulations.

To ensure quality care

[69] The regulations in Québec permit child care providers who wish to look after a maximum of nine children to do so if another adult assists them.

A recent study in Québec and the rest of Canada[70] confirms what had long been suspected: the fact that a family child care provider is able to network with colleagues through a local organization or family child care provider association is a prime factor in ensuring quality family child care. By virtue of their mandate, the CPEs are responsible, among other things, for promoting training and professional development activities for family child care providers and offering providers technical and professional support.[71] The MFE grants them funds for these purposes. If CPEs have a good grasp of the importance of this mandate and the needs of the providers, they could turn these legal obligations into unique learning and networking opportunities for the providers, thus making a significant contribution to ensuring the quality of family child care.

Given all the publicity surrounding the $5-a-day program, when parents are looking for family child care they tend to contact a CPE whose child care services are fully regulated. CPEs have all the necessary data on hand to facilitate the successful matching of parents and child care providers: characteristics of the child care setting, location, special requirements, operating hours, etc. Parents receive assistance throughout the various stages of searching for family child care that meets both their needs and those of their child. They gradually discover that the advantages of entrusting their child to a regulated child care provider outweigh the limited benefits of negotiating private agreements with a person who, for all intents and purposes, answers to no one.

To facilitate implementation of the educational program

The broad lines of the educational program advocated by the MFE are intended to promote child development, foster children's full potential and prepare them to enter school. By integrating all family child care under a single entity, it is possible to offer similar training to all providers, provide them with the necessary support and do the monitoring required to ensure the coherence and similarity of educational approaches, regardless of setting.

To assist decompartmentalization

There is a division between family child care and centre-based care. This is not surprising, as the two types arise from two different cultures: a more traditional one inspired by family values and the role traditionally reserved to mothers, and the other a more community-based one inspired by diversity, openness to others and a certain professionalization of the child care teacher's role. This is not to say that the values of openness and professionalism do not exist in family child care, or that family values and caring are rejected in child care centres,

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[70] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., LaGrange, A., Tougas, J. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in child care centres across Canada.* Chapter 8.

[71] Government of Québec (1997). *An act respecting childcare centres and childcare services.* Paragraph 9.

but rather to illustrate that each form of care has, over the years, built its own network and distinct infrastructure.

In being part of a single infrastructure, these two forms of care will find themselves increasingly called upon by circumstances and over time to consult one another. They will influence each other. Discussions will be inevitable between teachers, management, parents and administrators, on a daily basis and in the context of training and meetings. The CPE is the ideal place to begin a true process of integration and harmonization of the regulated child care services in Québec. For the time being, only two child care options are regulated and subsidized by government, but the day is in sight when drop-in centres, nursery schools and even in-home child care could be part of a range of ECCE options provided to Québec families (Chapter 2 included a discussion of child care service diversification).

From the government's point of view, the inclusion of family child care in the CPE structure, its coordination and planning, and the harmonization of regulated child care as a whole are all means of ensuring better quality family child care, public accountability, and optimizing the use of available resources.

A closer look

Do parents' perceptions reflect reality?

Parents say that they appreciate family child care for a variety of reasons already mentioned: its flexibility, the limited number of children in care at the same time and the differences in their ages, the fact that siblings can be cared for together, the continuity of the relationship with the same caregiver, and the recreated family environment. Other than in-home care, this is also the mode of child care that parents prefer for their infants and toddlers.

How flexible is it?

Flexibility is generally understood to refer to child care's ability to adapt to the diverse needs of its clientele. This can mean extending the hours of operation past 6:00 p.m. to meet the needs of parents who work in the evening, having children sleep over, opening very early in the morning, taking children on weekends, on an occasional or part-time basis or on call. It may also mean not requiring parents to sign a service agreement. It goes without saying that this desired flexibility has a major influence on family child care providers' working conditions. What may appear to be an advantage for the parents – the clients – may be experienced as a disadvantage by the providers who, in order to meet the needs of parents, already work very long hours – an average of 56.2 per week – and are subjected to

significant fluctuations in revenue as parents are not usually required to pay child care fees if their children are absent for an extended period (for reasons of sickness, vacation, etc.).

What do we see if we take a closer look? In its report on CPEs and child care centres in 1999, the MFE indicated that in 65.6% of the family child care components of the CPEs, a certain number of the providers regularly provided child care in the evening (498, approximately 9.0%), at night (254, approximately 5.0%), or on weekends (349, approximately 6.5%).[72] The *You Bet I Care!* study found that 14.3% of family child care providers regularly took in children before 7:00 a.m. and 7.1% provided care after 6:00 p.m., with 2.4% of these doing so after 7:00 p.m.[73] These percentages are higher than those found in centre-based care, where even few child care centres provide care outside of regular hours; and when they do, they use a second team of teachers.

Thus, family child care appears to be relatively flexible, more flexible, at any rate, than centre-based care. But it is important to remember that in family child care, the same person looks after the children during all the hours of operation as regulations require that child care providers be constantly present with the children for whom they are responsible. This means that they have no breaks and no time for their own family. This last point is, in fact, one of the most important work-related stress factors experienced by family child care providers[74] and, as one can well imagine, this stress has a direct impact on the quality of the interactions between the provider and the children in her care.

It was not possible to find data on caring for children part-time, occasionally, or on call, that are specific to the family child care providers of Québec. However, I consulted the CPEs and was told that, since the introduction of the $5-a-day program, fewer and fewer children were being cared for on a part-time basis. Most parents opt for five-days-a-week child care now that it is within their financial means. Also, it is much more to the family child care providers' advantage to fill their spaces with children who regularly attend their child care on a full-time basis. It is easier to implement the educational program; there are fewer families to juggle, fewer parents, and fewer diverse needs; and the children become more comfortable with one another. Given the high demand for spaces at the reduced rate, family child care providers are able to select a clientele that will allow them the best working conditions. As for child care on an occasional basis or on call, this has become practically nonexistent. Parents must register with a CPE in order to have a space at the reduced rate; given the high demand, all available spaces are taken. CPE-accredited providers are not

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[72] Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance (2000). *Situation des centres de la petite enfance et des garderies en 1999*, pg. 53.
[73] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., Tougas, J., LaGrange, A. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in child care centres across Canada:* Section 5.3.
[74] Ibid., Table 4.7.

permitted to take children on a private basis.

Given the above, to what extent, then, does family child care, or at least family child care coordinated by the CPEs in Québec, possess the flexibility attributed to it? The answer would seem to be: to the extent to which the family child care providers accept working conditions that are detrimental to them and that could, in the end, detract from the quality of the services they provide.

What about the size and composition of the groups of children?

In Québec, a regulated family child care provider can look after *"1) up to six children including the person's children under nine years of age, among whom not more than two may be under the age of 18 months; or 2) if the person is assisted by another adult, to [sic] up to nine children including their children under nine years of age, among whom not more than four may be under the age of 18 months."*[75]

The MFE's report on the CPE situation notes that *"Almost six family child care providers out of ten 58.3% care for between 4 and 6 children, that is a bit over half of all the children cared for in FDC; 26.1% care for between 7 and 9 children, that is 38.9% of all the children cared for in FDC; and 15.7% care for between 1 and 3 children, that is 6.7% of all the children cared for in FDC."*[76] According to the same report, the Québec family child care providers look after an average of 5.5 children each (see Appendix A for a discussion of the link between group size and provider income.

You Bet I Care! found that the composition of the groups of children was extremely varied in family child care. Indeed, it was not uncommon for a single family child care provider to look after one infant, one 2-year-old, three 3-to-4-year olds, and one child age 6 or older. The trend towards multi-aged groups observed in family child care reflects another tendency: taking care of a number of children from the same family. Québec-wide, 69% of family child care providers looked after siblings.[77]

Consequently, in Québec, the majority of parents with children in a CPE-coordinated family child care home have the satisfaction of knowing that their child is cared for in a small group, and has a good chance both of having friends of different ages and of growing up alongside his or her little brother or big sister. They also know that their child is always with

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[75] Government of Québec (1997). *An act respecting childcare centres and childcare services.* Paragraph 1.

[76] Ministère de la famille et de l enfance (2000).Translation. *Situation des centres de la petite enfance et des garderies en 1999*, p. 46.

[77] Doherty, G. Lero, D., Goelman, H., Tougas, J., LaGrange, A. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in regulated family child care across Canada,* Chapter 5, Section 5.2.

the same adult, who is able to get to know the child well and stimulate the child's development throughout the various phases. In the case of children who are in a group of seven to nine, even if the group is slightly larger, the advantages of a multi-aged group and the presence of children from the same family remain, not to mention the fact that the children are with two adults and that research has shown this dynamic to be beneficial to the quality of care.[78]

What about the family environment?

The parents who opt for family child care readily admit that they want their children's daily life to resemble as much as possible what the children would experience at home, surrounded by a group of friends. For these parents, the socialization of their child before entering school takes place in an extended family environment. What exactly is their vision or definition of a so-called family environment? Do they have in mind the family child care home's lay-out and way of doing things, with the children going from one room of the house to another according to the nature of the activity: eating their snack at the kitchen table, watching a children's television show in the living room, doing arts and crafts in the playroom, taking their nap in the bedroom? Or do they consider it as having to do with the child care provider and her family, with the fact that the family members are part of the children's daily life: the teenager after school helping with homework or doing arts and crafts with the little ones, the spouse eating lunch with the children, the grandmother going with them to the park? (see Appendix A for a discussion on what is meant by family environment).

We obviously cannot answer for all the parents, and a single definition of the family environment would be neither satisfactory nor desirable. Meanwhile, the family dimension of a family child care home and its actualization are concepts which bear closer examination. Family child care formerly coordinated by family child care agencies and now coordinated by the CPEs has undergone a remarkable evolution during its 20 years of existence in Québec, as have the expectations of it. The people who take on this work do so deliberately. The *You Bet I Care!* researchers found that only a minority of family child care providers chose this profession either because they could not find other work or to help out someone else. Family child care providers juggle several motivations but the principal ones are a love of children and the desire to work with them, and the desire to earn a living while caring for their own children.[79] The current conditions in family child care in Québec indeed make it possible for providers to work with children while looking after their own but are far from

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[78] Ibid., Table 7.1.

[79] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., Tougas, J., LaGrange, A. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in child care centres across Canada:* Table 4.5.

providing them with the means of earning a satisfactory living. The current attempts by the family child care providers of Québec[80] to pressure the government into improving their income and working conditions should be given proper consideration and examined in a new light. That would require re-examining what constitutes family child care, its context, and the setting in which it is provided. Some of the considerations pertaining to this question are reviewed in the concluding chapter.

What about infants?

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, a high percentage of Québec parents prefer family child care for their very young children. In 1998, according to a study on regulated family child care providers, 17.6% of their clientele was under the age of 18 months.[81] This figure is twice as high as in centre-based care, where spaces for infants account for slightly more than 8.0% of all available spaces,[82] but remains lower than what would be necessary to meet the demand. In Québec, the government pays an additional allowance to family child care providers who look after infants, and this amount has recently been increased from $6.50 per child to $8.50. This constitutes a true financial incentive, but despite it, according to CPE administrators, family child care providers are reluctant to take infants. Reconciling the needs of infants, which are numerous and must be satisfied immediately, with those of the older children is not simple if one wants to ensure the quality of the care. To look after one or two infants, many child care providers restrict the size of their group or hire an assistant. Despite the additional subsidy, they lose financially. Thus, one should not be astonished to note that many family child care providers refuse to include infants in multi-aged groups, or offer to specialize in this clientele only on condition that they be granted special arrangements: different ratios, higher rates, modified educational program, equipment, etc.

Furthermore, one should question the soundness of putting forth financial or other measures to encourage the family child care providers to take in infants if they are not accompanied with the support and training necessary to allow them to deal appropriately with this age group. The *You Bet I Care!* study found that the presence of children under the age of 18 months in family child care settings was liable to have a negative impact on the overall quality of the care provided.[83] It should be understood that while the care of infants

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[80] Cf. Association des éducatrices en milieu familial du Québec (www.aemfq.com) and Fédération des intervenantes en petite enfance du Québec (http://ceq.qc.ca/fede/fipeq.htm).

[81] Canadian Child Care Federation (1998). *Providing home child care for a living: A survey of providers working in the unregulated sector in their own home.* CCCF (Ottawa), Table 4.1.

[82] Ministèré de la famille et de l'enfance (2000). *Situation des centres de la petite enfance et des garderies en 1999.* Table 5.4.

[83] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., Tougas, J., LaGrange, A. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in child care centres across Canada:* Section 8.6.

naturally requires the mothering qualities sought by parents, it also requires a good understanding of child development and the mechanisms that stimulate social, emotional and intellectual development. If there is an age at which all efforts must be made to ensure that children have an equal chance in life, it is while they are still infants.

If one accepts that the development of the early childhood care and education system in Québec rests mainly on the shoulders of family child care...

One needs to listen to the family child care providers

There currently seems to be dissatisfaction among the CPE-coordinated family child care providers, dissatisfaction that will continue to grow unless family child care providers have more influence over the decisions affecting them. It should be understood that the changes in Québec's ECCE system that have occurred since 1997 — the creation of the CPEs, the introduction of the $5-a-day program, the tightening of the regulations, to name just a few — took place without the family child care providers being consulted or having a word to say. The family child care providers had felt for a long time that the family child care agencies did not speak in their name or defend their interests. At a time when it would have been important for them to be united and well represented, no organization presented itself to champion their cause.

Circumstances have changed. The family child care providers have organized. A few organizations stand out and represent a growing number of providers. Already, they sit at the various issue tables set up by the government, and they bring to the debate a dimension that has seldom been heard, and to which the non-profit child care sector has in the past not paid much attention. Make no mistake: the family child care providers' discourse often resembles that of the private operators (owners of centres). These women may well be providing child care services, but they are nevertheless managing their own small businesses. Their love of children and the passion they bring to their profession do not prevent them from trying to make the enterprise profitable. Unlike salaried teachers, profitability for self-employed caregivers means being free to set one's own child care fees, to determine the number of children for whom one wishes to care, and to organize and set up one's child care setting as one sees fit — within governmental norms, of course.

As I have already mentioned, CPE-coordinated family child care is on the border between non-profit and commercial child care. It is important to come to terms with this fact. The challenge is to listen to the family child care providers and take into consideration their grievances and "private" interests, while encouraging them to participate and contribute whole-heartedly to the educational, community-oriented, collective mission of the CPEs.

It is essential that the providers be open to the community-based, collective dimension of their profession

Family child care providers in Québec may choose to work outside the regulated family child care sector. If such is their choice, they are free to set their fees as they wish, to set up their child care environment as they choose, to take in a clientele that suits them (a maximum of six children including their own), to establish their own hours, to find support where they wish, etc. They are free to live their self-employed status as they see fit.

If, on the other hand, they choose to become associated with a CPE, it is in all likelihood because they see advantages in doing so without which they would continue to work outside the regulated system. Here is a list, based on a report that CPEs submit annually to the MFE, of the services potentially offered by CPEs to the family child care providers they coordinate, in order of frequency:

- distribution of various forms and written materials
- pedagogical support, training, social activities for providers
- contact with partners in the community
- activities for the children
- group purchasing
- toy library
- social activities with the parents
- equipment rental for infants
- educational resource centre
- child care fee collection.

It is interesting to note in Table 3.4 that the principal reasons that motivated family child care providers to join a CPE fall into two main groups: services and support offered by the CPE, and recruitment of client families. As one can see, the principal reasons cited are essentially private in nature. In 1998 at least, the community-oriented nature of CPEs and participation in a social and collective process were not among the immediate concerns of the family child care providers.

TABLE 3.4: REASONS FOR JOINING A CENTRE DE LA PETITE ENFANCE, 1998.

Services and support offered	Recruitment of client families	%
	To demonstrate to parents that my care meets standards of quality	69.2
Preferred having the agency deal with parents around contracts and		56.7

money issues		
As a way of getting more support (such as training, equipment loans)		50.0
	To enable me to care for families who were receiving subsidies	32.5
	As a means of finding client families	25.0
As a way of getting in touch with other caregivers		12.5

Note: Family child care providers could, and often did, choose three reasons
Source: Doherty et al. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in regulated family child care centres across Canada* Table 4.6.

Admittedly, family child care providers have not historically taken part, any more than have child care agencies for that matter, in the struggles of non-profit and community-based child care to develop and consolidate a public child care system or to improve the salaries and conditions of workers in the field. The eminently private nature of family child care – the fact that family child care providers negotiate individual agreements with their client families – and the fact that on the whole child care agencies never succeeded, despite certain laudable initiatives such as Child Care Week, in establishing a relationship of trust and collaboration with non-profit child care, explain this state of affairs to a large extent.

But this situation has also changed. Government policies now place family child care providers at the heart of Québec's child care strategy. The CPEs, of which family child care providers are a major component, form the basis of the community-based ECCE system. This implies a philosophy and values to which CPE-accredited family child care providers must adhere. They will have to learn to reconcile their personal interests with those of the other child care workers in the field, of the families and children who need good quality child care, and of society in general.

One can demand both "professional" recognition and satisfactory working conditions for oneself, and fight for a publicly funded ECCE system. There is no contradiction, especially as research shows that the quality of family child care is closely linked to the way family child care providers feel about their work, the fact that they like what they do, and the fact that they network with other family child care providers through structured organizations.[84] Thus, the family child care providers who choose to be part of a CPE – many of them – must learn to listen to the needs of the community, of the child care field, and of the families and children from a perspective that is larger than the legitimate but

[84] Ibid., Table 8.3.

incomplete "service provider-client" relationship. They will have to take into account the considerations that make compromise necessary on both sides.

It is essential to reconcile the family child care providers' interests and those of the Centres de la petite enfance.

There is a consensus in Québec society on the needs of families and children. This was in fact what motivated the government to introduce a child care policy of this magnitude. Family child care providers are called upon to make a significant contribution. Will they agree to do so? I think they will, in so far as the desire for independence that made them choose this profession in the first place is respected, they have control over the decisions concerning them, and the CPE is sufficiently flexible to understand and take into consideration the interests of these "independent" workers. The subordinate relationship that the family child care providers denounce in comparison to their self-employed status is an important issue and a real problem to which we must try to negotiate solutions.

On the other hand, I believe that the CPEs must do everything they can to enable providers to identify with their educational and community-oriented mission and to take ownership of it. The CPEs have the mandate to ensure that providers meet the requirements of the Act and child care regulations, that they implement the Ministry's educational program, and that they have the qualifications required to do their work well. They must therefore make the necessary provisions and put the required measures in place. Family child care providers must play an active role socially so that they can give children the environment necessary for their optimal development. Thus, the CPEs must ensure and verify that the providers who are part of the public system contribute to its construction and consolidation. The private nature of family child care must at all times be subordinate to the community and collective interests of early childhood care and education.

Chapter 4

School-age child care programs

INTRODUCTION

School-age child care programs made their official appearance in Québec at the tail end of the 1970s; almost 40 were in place in 1979. Implemented on the initiative of school administrators and parent committees, and in response to the glaring problem of lunchtime and after school "latchkey" children, school-age child care programs joined the array of centre-based child care services for children under the age of 6, and family child care services for children ages 0 to 12. Funding came from three main sources: from the parents (fees), from the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ) (start-up and operating grants) and from the Office des services de garde à l'enfance (financial exemption (fee subsidies) for low-income families). The roles and responsibilities of these programs, and the organization of their human and financial resources, activities and physical settings varied widely, and were largely dependent on the administrators and the schools in which they were located. Some would say that they still are dependent on school administrators in that it is up to the latter to determine the place they are willing to allow the programs.

An excellent document[85] has been produced by the MEQ, in both French and English, on the organizational framework and financing of school-age child care programs, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the latter as set out in the *Education Act* and the *Regulation Respecting Childcare Services Provided at School*. It would be redundant to repeat the exercise here. Instead, to allow my readers to get their bearings, I have chosen first to provide a very brief overview of how school-age child care works in Québec and how the programs have evolved since the introduction of the education reform, and second, to examine certain aspects of the school-age child care program with respect to strengths, grey areas and things to improve.

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[85] Ministère de l'Éducation (2000). *School daycare services: Information document*. On line: www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/m_pub.htm.

An overview of how school-age child care programs work in Québec

Clientele and objectives

School-age child care is intended for 5- to 12-year-olds attending full-day kindergarten and elementary school, and 4-year-olds from disadvantaged areas attending half-day kindergarten. Its mandate is to *"ensure care to children (...) outside the periods where educational services are provided to them."*[86] The objectives are an extension of the Education Act and are defined in the regulations as follows:

- to ensure the safety and general well-being of the children served;
- to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the school's educational project;
- to set up activities and recreational projects that contribute to the children's overall development;
- to encourage the development of social skills such as respect, cooperation and openness;
- to offer homework support after school by providing students with an appropriate place in which to work and the time and materials they require.[87]

Some children attend school-age child care on a regular basis for at least two hours a day, three days a week, while others do so sporadically, that is to say for fewer hours a day and less frequently.

Staff

By the regulation, school-age programs must have a co-ordinator and a team of child care educators whose numbers vary according to the number of children attending the program. Child care staff are school board employees; as such they are governed by an agreement between the Comité Patronal de Négociation pour les Commissions Scolaires Francophones (CPNCF) and the Fédération Indépendante des Syndicats Affiliés (FISA, a union representing the support staff of the French school boards in Québec). The agreement covers wages, working conditions, staff movement and job security, arbitration and grievance procedures among other provisions.

Regarding wages, since January 1, 2000 the "responsable de service de garde" or coordinator category has a 12-level wage scale. In 2001, the hourly wage of coordinators

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[86] Government of Québec (1997). *Regulation Respecting Childcare Services Provided at School*, Paragraph 1.
[87] Ministère de l'Éducation (2000). *School daycare services: Information document*, p. 4. On line: www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/m_pub.htm.

varies between $14.44 and $21.46. There are seven levels in the "éducatrice ou éducateur en service de garde" (child care educator) category, where the hourly wage varies between $13.61 and $16.68.[88]

In the absence of stronger regulations, notably with respect to training, where the only requirement for school child care staff is a first-aid course and where no mention is made of the staff's role in child development, the unions have played an important role in ensuring that staff are no longer *"seen as strictly monitoring and supervising the children but as full-fledged educators who ensure the well-being and the safety of the children and foster their overall development through activities based on their needs and interests."*[89] The support staff classification scheme,[90] the result of an employer-union agreement, defines not only the coordinator position but that of the child care educators as well. It sets out the principals and usual role of the coordinator as being to elaborate an educational program in accordance with the school's educational plan, to promote the children's general development and to ensure their well-being and safety; and the role of the educators as being to organize, prepare and lead activities promoting the children's general development and ensuring their well-being and safety. Furthermore, the classification plan states that coordinators should possess a college diploma in ECCE or a diploma or certificate whose equivalency is recognized by a competent authority. While the required qualifications for the teaching staff are clearly unsatisfactory, under the classification plan educators must nonetheless possess a high school diploma, or a diploma or certificate whose equivalency is recognized by a competent authority, and possess one year of relevant work experience. This is somewhat more reassuring than a simple first-aid course!

Organization and program of activities

School-age child care programs are generally open from 7:00 a.m. until the beginning of classes in the morning, again during lunch hour, and also after school until 6:00 p.m. They may be open all day on pedagogical, or professional development, days, spring break or in the event of a storm. Usually, they are located in the school itself but occasionally children go to a room nearby if the school does not have sufficient space. While they usually have a room reserved specifically for their use, they also share multipurpose, music and art rooms, classrooms, the library, the gymnasium, the school cafeteria and the playground with others. In designated schools that provide half-day kindergarten for 4-year-olds, school-age child care is available in the morning or afternoon depending on the children's schedule, and is

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[88] Comité patronal de négociation pour les commissions scolaires francophones. Entente intervenue entre le CPNCF et la FISA (2000-2002).
[89] Association des services de garde en milieu scolaire du Québec (2000) *Gardavue*, February 2000, Number 1, p. 4.
[90] Comité patronal de négociation pour les commissions scolaires francophones. Plan de Classification, May 3, 2000 edition.

usually located in a space adjacent to their classroom, or even in the classroom itself, so as to facilitate the transition between the two.

School-age child care programs fulfill different mandates. They are intended to provide 4-year-olds from disadvantaged areas who attend half-day kindergarten with educational activities that complement the children's classroom learning, a sort of nursery school inside the school. The Association des services de garde en milieu scolaire du Québec (ASGEMSQ) uses the term *périscolaire* to describe these activities, which, without being strictly intra-curricular activities, contribute to the children's overall physical, moral or intellectual education. They are an integral part of the school's program and all the students for whom the activities are intended must participate in them.[91]

Further, school-age child care programs provide 4-year-olds as well as 5- to 12-year-olds with recreational activities during before-school, lunchtime and after school child care periods, and reserve a block of time for homework. The ASGEMSQ consider these to be *parascolaire* or extra-curricular activities that, although they take place in a school setting, are not an indispensable complement to the official program of studies. They are optional activities provided by the school or the school board.[92] The program of activities is adapted to suit the needs of the different age groups and the students' schedules. Hence, 4- and 5-year-olds are usually grouped together, as are students from Grades One through Three (6- to 8-year-olds) and Four through Six (9- to 12-year-olds).

Funding

All school-age child care programs are non-profit and must operate on a balanced budget. Their two main sources of funding are government grants and the fees paid by the parents. Government funding take the form of various subsidies, notably start-up, capital expenditure and operating grants. This last category, as well as subsidies for 4-year-olds and students with disabilities, is only available for children who attend child care regularly. The child care program receives no government grants for children who attend only sporadically.

As for parent fees, since September 1998, parents whose children attend the school-age child care programs on a regular basis pay $5 a day, including professional development days. The programs can ask for top-up fees of $1 to $3 an hour if the children spend more than five hours in child care on regular school days, and more than ten on professional development days. Parents of children who attend child care on an occasional basis are not eligible for the $5-a-day program. The amount they pay is therefore determined by their

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[91] Association des services de garde en milieu scolaire du Québec (1997). *Plan de développement des services de garde en milieu scolaire*, p. 11.
[92] Ibid.

child's attendance: for example, $2.50 for before-school and lunchtime child care and $4.50 for after-school care, or a set amount for the whole day, which may vary from $7 to $16 a day.[93] School child care programs may choose to open their doors on holidays and during spring break but if they do, the services provided must pay for themselves through parent fees. Government support for spaces at the reduced rate ($5) do not apply on such days.

Development

To understand the way in which school-age child care programs are developed, it is important to know that, following on the heels of the educational reform begun in 1996 under the slogan *A New Direction for Success*, the government of Québec adopted a new Education Act (Loi 180) which provides for the creation of governing boards in schools. These boards play several roles in the schools and with respect to school-age child care. Among other things, it is at the request of the governing board that a school board establishes a child care program in a school. In other words, if the governing board judges that there is sufficient demand in the school to warrant a child care program, the school administration and school board must set about establishing one. All school child care projects with governing board support are considered admissible, and to all intents and purposes receive the funding – notably in the form of start-up grants and capital expenditure allowances – required for the project to be set up.

Distribution of roles and responsibilities

The organization and smooth running of school-age child care programs is dependent on several entities, committees and persons. The following description of the roles and responsibilities of the numerous groups of individuals involved in the sector is drawn directly from the information document on school-age child care programs published by the MEQ.[94] The various paragraphs of the *Education Act* that concern school-age child care, and the *Regulation Respecting Childcare Services Provided at School* have also been drawn into the summary.

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[93] Data taken from the *Rapport du sondage réalisé auprès des services de garde en milieu scolaire sur les places à 5 $ par jour*, p. 4. Association des services de garde en milieu scolaire du Québec (1998).
[94] Cf. Ministère de l'Éducation (2000). *School daycare services: Information document*. On line: www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/m_pub.htm.

At the top of the pyramid are the MEQ **regional offices**. They must:

- analyze proposals from school boards for the establishment or renewal of child care services;
- determine the allowances to which child care programs are entitled;
- ensure that the school boards have the information they require;
- disseminate all relevant information;
- ensure that child care services are made available in compliance with the *Education Act* and the *Regulation Respecting Childcare Services Provided At School,* and that they conform to the budgetary rules in force.

Next are the **school boards,** which:

- monitor the organization and maintenance of school-age child care programs;
- offer support to principals with respect to the quality and enhancement of child care services;
- follow up on requests from governing boards and child care parents' committees;
- establish the rules and criteria for hiring personnel, taking into account the qualifications required, and the stipulations of the recall lists and collective agreements;
- hire personnel as required to ensure compliance at all times with the maximum ratio of one adult for every 20 children.

These are followed by the **governing boards**, which fulfill numerous school-related roles along with the following child care-related ones:

- request that the school board provide the students at the school with child care services on the school premises or, if the school does not have suitable premises, on other premises;
- approve the use of the premises placed at the disposal of the school for its child care services, and ensuring that there is sufficient space provided therein for the number of children;
- set up, if deemed appropriate, a child care parents' committee;
- receive representations and recommendations from the daycare parents' committee;
- respond to parents' requests;
- approve the rules of conduct and the safety measures proposed by the school principal;
- advise the school board concerning any matter likely to improve the organization of the services it provides;

- inform the community of the services provided by the school.

School principals are the primary individuals responsible for the child care services provided by their schools. They must:

- ensure the quality of the services provided;
- see to it that educational activities are carried out according to plan;
- coordinate, overall, the child care program's human, material and financial resources;
- see that the child care program and staff are integrated into the life of the school;
- ensure the safety of the children during outings off the premises, the maintenance of the premises, equipment, furnishings and playthings in good condition, access to a first-aid kit and the keeping of a registration card for each child.

The quality of school-age child care is the daily responsibility of the team composed of the coordinator and child care staff. The **educators** must:

- ensure at all times the well-being and safety of the children in their care;
- take part in the planning and preparation of activities, projects, and educational and recreational outings;
- carry out research related to child care activities;
- carry out educational activities according to plan;
- ensure that the child care day runs smoothly and efficiently (reception, roll call, activities, meals, schoolwork, etc.);
- take a positive, noncoercive approach with students;
- lead the activities;
- communicate with parents;
- participate in child care meetings.

Apart from these responsibilities, the **child care coordinator** must carry out tasks determined by the school principal, including:

- taking part in the development and evaluation of child care educational activities;
- drafting rules of operation for the child care program;
- informing child care parents of the rules in force;
- registering students and making any necessary updates to attendance cards;
- ensuring compliance with the policies and regulations in force at the school;
- ensuring communication between all concerned parties;
- passing on to the appropriate authorities any requests, complaints or suggestions received;

- preparing and running various types of meetings;
- assisting the school principal with financial management of the child care program;
- collecting the parents' financial contribution;
- taking part in the determination of human resource needs;
- coordinating the work of the child care staff;
- taking part in the physical and material organization of the child care program;
- purchasing material and equipment in accordance with established procedures.

Of course, the **parents** also have a role and responsibilities. Individually, they must:

- comply with the child care program's rules of operation;
- pay the requisite fees;
- ensure that they have all necessary information;
- cooperate in building a good relationship with child care staff.

As a group, parents can go one step further and form **parents' committees** to examine the quality of the child care services provided for their children, the rules of operation and any other aspect concerning the daily operation of the child care program attended by their children.

And what of the **students**? What are their principal responsibilities? School-age child care programs exist solely because of and for the students, the central element. The students' share of responsibility consists in maintaining a cooperative and positive attitude towards proposed activities, and participating actively in the life and program of the child care.

The introduction of the Education Reform and the implementation of the family policy

Where do school-age child care programs fall under the Education Reform?

In October 1996, soon after the Estates General meetings on Education, Pauline Marois, the Minister of Education and Minister Responsible for Families and Children, announced an in-depth reform of Québec's education system. She stated that the reform's success lay in completely eliminating illiteracy, enabling individuals to acquire the knowledge they need to meet the challenges of the job market, and permitting more individuals to obtain diplomas, while also raising the quality of the latter. To realize these objectives, the Minister proposed a series of measures,[95] including two that directly concerned school-age child care; i.e.

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[95] These are the seven principle guidelines adopted by the Minister of Education for the proposed reform: providing educational services for young children, teaching the essential subjects, giving more power to schools,

providing educational services for young children, and granting greater autonomy to schools.

It is interesting to note that the Minister announced the anticipated child care reform in October 1996, following closely on the heels of the education reform. Although ECCE is a component of Québec's family policy – the other two components being the introduction of an integrated family allowance and an extended parental leave program – its educational ramifications and the intrinsic ties between child care and education are evident. For historical and administrative reasons, children aged 0 to 4 were placed under the auspices of the Ministère de la Famille et de l'enfance and 5- to 12-year-olds under that of the MEQ but the Minister insisted on the importance of elaborating "a comprehensive early childhood program in order to meet the needs of all children."[96]

Thus, early childhood care and education straddled the two ministries from the very beginning; it included the centres de la petite enfance (CPEs), half-day kindergarten for 4-year-olds from disadvantaged areas, full-day kindergarten for 5-year-olds, and school-age child care programs. The mandate of the school-age programs was already becoming apparent. These would be responsible notably for completing the learning that 4-year-olds would do in kindergarten by way of educational (périscolaires) activities, and would implement activities such as "helping with homework, for example"[97] for the 5- to 12-year-olds in the school. For school-age child care programs to meet these responsibilities, certain conditions would be necessary.

The school-team concept

Evidently, if educators are expected to be able to support and participate in the school teachers' efforts to ensure the childrens' success, they must make the school's educational project their own, and be part of the school-team. A study on educational services for preschool-age children carried out in 1998 for the Caledon Institute on Public Policy focused primarily on the possible repercussions of an integrated ECCE model for 4- and 5-year-olds. To do this, researchers observed preschool-age child care programs and kindergarten classes. They noted, among other things, that in those schools where services in child care and kindergarten were better co-ordinated (for example, communication between child care staff and teachers about the children, consultation on activities, cooperation in sharing of the premises, support from school administrators), the level of quality tended to be higher.[98]

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special strategies for Montreal schools, vocational and technical training, consolidating and rationalizing higher and continuing education.

[96] Ministère de l'Education (1996). *Grandes orientations de la réforme de l'éducation*, presentation by the Minister of Education, Press Conference, October 24, 1996.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Johnson, L.C. and Mathien, J. (1998). *Early childhood services for kindergarten-age children in four Canadian Provinces: Scope, nature and models for the future.* Caledon Institue of Social Policy. Ottawa, p. 41.

While this research involved only preschoolers, one might think that real, healthy collaboration among school administrators, teachers and child care staff is paramount for all age groups. It is encouraging to see that the *Education Act* provides for one seat on a school's governing board for child care staff and four seats for school staff members, including at least two teachers. One may assume that one of those seats would also be occupied by the school principal. Indeed, if cooperation, dialogue and communication rested solely on relationships, whether friendly or professional, that may or may not develop between individuals working in the schools (as was the case when school-age programs first appeared) it would still be a while until child care and education services became truly integrated. Such integration requires a structural framework that supports and promotes the process. The governing board seems ideally suited to this role – as long, of course, as school-age child care programs are vigilant and participate both actively and strategically.

Active and strategic participation

The governing board is the site of major decisions concerning the school, decisions that affect school-age child care. It is the governing board that adopts the school's annual budget and, consequently, that of the child care program. It should be pointed out that approval of the budget implies acceptance of its principal tenets and the school's educational project. The governing board also decides upon the use of school premises for different purposes: cultural, social, community and athletic. We know to what extent the use of a school's premises, the way in which the premises are shared, can be a major irritant for people working at a school. As a member of the school-team and of the governing board, the child care representative has the same powers as the other members of the governing board but must be especially attentive and present during discussions so as to ensure that the child care program's point of view is heard. Automatic consideration of the expectations and needs of a sector which was considered to be useful certainly, but often bothersome and – more important – non-essential, had not until recently entered the education field's culture.

Things have changed, and more rapidly than could have been imagined. To everyone's surprise, in September 1998 the government introduced a program of $5-a-day school-age child care, as it had for ECCE for 0- to 4-year-olds. As was to be expected, the affordability of the services resulted in accelerated growth of the network (see Table 4.1), cementing its existence. The message to schools is clear. It is necessary not simply to "make do" with school-age child care programs, but to welcome them as partners in the school's educational project. The educational role of school-age child care has been officially recognized.

TABLE 4.1 : TWO-YEAR PROGRESSION IN NUMBER OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE PROGRAMS, NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND GRANTS, 1998/99–1999/2000

Years	Number	Number of	Number of	Total	New	Grants

	of schools	regular children	occasional children	clientele	services	
1998/1999	1,090	82,888	37,680	120,568	179	$53,550,403
1999/2000	1,249	110,030	42,134	152,164	177	$70,989,051

Source: MEQ's 1998/1999 and 1999/2000 comprehensive reports.

Having a seat on the school's governing board is certainly a step forward for the school-age child care sector and promotes its recognition, but it also presents an ideal opportunity for the child care program's representative to forge alliances with school parents, especially those whose children attend the program. Child care parents are, by force of circumstance, directly concerned with the child care portfolio in their school and, when well informed, are the school-age programs' best advocates. *The Regulation Respecting Childcare Services Provided at School* specifies that the governing board may create a parent committee to make recommendations and suggestions concerning all aspects of the life of children in a child care program; from a strategic point of view, the existence of a such a committee is highly desirable.

Some repercussions

The effect of amalgamation of the school boards

As we have seen, school boards are responsible for looking after the organization and maintenance of school-age child care programs and establishing the rules and hiring criteria for child care staff. They are also responsible for acting upon any recommendations that may be made by governing boards or daycare parents' committees. The school-age child care programs within each school board thus have a style and way of doing things all their own.

When public education in Québec underwent massive reform with the resulting amalgamation of the school boards in 1998, a wave of insecurity spread through the child care network. Child care programs found themselves in new, larger, school boards, with new people responsible for school-age child care. This meant changes, a reorganization, negotiations, and harmonization of ways of operating and working conditions. One must not forget that the child care program is still the odd one out in the school, which is primarily a teaching entity. Child care staff frequently feel isolated. It is up to the school board to provide the different child care programs under its responsibility with a forum for networking. In February 1998, the ASGEMSQ (the association for school-age child care) gave this advice to school-age child care coordinators: *"Ask the authorities in charge of child care in*

your school board to call a meeting of programs or better yet to establish a committee where program co-ordinators can network and help each other out."[99]

The effect of full-day kindergarten

The introduction of full-day kindergarten for 5-year-olds in 1997 had a major effect on school-age child care's hours of operation. Overnight, educators saw their workday reduced and broken up into discontinuous blocks of time as kindergarten children who had usually attended child care in the morning or the afternoon no longer needed it during those times. Furthermore, schools were required to set up rooms as quickly as possible to accommodate this new band of kindergarteners. The result was a reduction in the number of rooms set aside for the child care programs, and physical conditions that were far less suitable.

The sector also experienced an important exodus of qualified educators to other educational settings, especially kindergarten, where the demand was high and salaries superior, and towards child care centres where there was, and still is, an enormous need for human resources and where, despite lower salaries, a child care teacher could still expect full-time work and continuous hours. These departures of course meant the loss of precious experience and resources from the sector, and destabilized the remaining staff; they caused children attending school-age child care who had developed ties with the child care teachers to feel insecure; and they substantially increased the work of the coordinators who, in many cases, on top of having to recruit and train new employees, also had to care for groups of children.

The effect of the $5-a-day program

The almost immediate consequence of the implementation of the $5-a-day program was an important — one might even say spectacular — increase in the demand for school-age child care. Besides a lack of adequate space, the school boards faced a shortage of staff with the appropriate training to fill the educator positions. Under the circumstances, they hired individuals with no training — as permitted in the regulations — with all the problems such action entails for other staff.

A new vision

As one might well suppose, such upheavals, notably the amalgamation of the school boards, the $5-a-day program and full-day kindergarten, caused serious soul-searching in the sector. School-age child care programs were forced to ask themselves whether their designated place in schools was satisfactory, and whether they could influence decisions that concerned them. Out of the reflection and consultations was born a development plan for school-age child care in Québec. The vision for the sector is that of diversified services provided by

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[99] ASGEMSQ (1998) *Gardavue*, February 1998, Number 3, p. 4.

school-age child care programs in the schools. *"School-age programs want to diversify their activities in order to oversee and meet the varied needs of students and to prevent and counteract the social isolation of some children."*[100] This involves talk of a new model, *services extrascolaires* (extra-academic services), which would include educational activities (périscolaire) and extra-curricular activities (parascolaire):

> *educational activities for four-year-olds from disadvantaged areas, supervision and leading activities during recesses, regular or occasional child care, summer activities in collaboration with the municipalities, homework support, outings and special activities, athletic, cultural and social activities, lunchtime supervision and leading activities, support for parents.*

IN CONCLUSION

The policies adopted and implemented in the wake of the education reform confirmed the importance of school-age child care and its role as a means of family and educational support. They helped stimulate its growth and make its services more accessible and affordable for the majority of families. The organizational structure is well thought out and functional. The responsibilities of each level of authority are clear. School-age child care programs have become increasingly visible and may now be considered as here to stay. The effort is laudable.

However, measures to ensure the quality of care have not followed. As is often the case in the child care field, the quality in the sector depends entirely on the staff and its good will. In the current context, without the necessary tools or resources, that quality will only erode. Increased demand for school-age child care has resulted in very large child care programs that often do not have enough space, in rooms that are not set up to meet the needs of such a large number of children of such widely varying ages and needs. It is reported that school-age child care programs are too noisy; that children have no space where they can do their homework or relax peacefully. The adult-child ratio (1:20) is not conducive to personalized interaction between adults and children. Under such conditions, it is difficult for educators to get to know the children and care for their individual needs. As we have seen, the required qualifications for educators do not prepare them to meet the challenges this type of care presents.

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[100] Association des services de garde en milieu scolaire du Québec (1997). *Plan de développement des services de garde en milieu scolaire*, p. 13.

To date, as has been the case for the CPEs, the focus has been upon rapidly developing school-age child care to meet the urgent and legitimate needs of the parents. But to expand school-age child care to the detriment of its quality is to lose sight of its role in children's success in school, their development and their preparation for life.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

Some of the early childhood education and care-related actions undertaken by the Québec government over the past four years, particularly the new funding arrangements and wage enhancements, have unquestionably been right on target and have rectified intolerable situations. A larger number of Québec families now have access to eminently affordable regulated child care, regardless of their income or employment status. Further, the vast majority of child care centres and family child care providers affiliated with centres de la petite enfance or CPEs no longer suffer from the financial instability they had known for so many years, as current budgetary provisions allow them to balance their regular service budget. As well, the current province-wide negotiations over wages have brought some balance throughout the system. Disparities have been reduced if not eliminated, and the skills and importance of child care workers in the CPE centres are now recognized. There is renewed interest in the profession, and this bodes well for the future.

On the other hand, however, the extremely rapid development of the system and the tendency, both at the ministerial level and in the field itself, to focus exclusively on the creation of new spaces, are elements that have resulted in the neglect of other, nonetheless essential, aspects directly linked to the quality of care. If it has been important to expand the system quickly and to ensure that more families have access to early childhood care and education, it is now necessary to consolidate and ensure the quality of the care provided.

This fifth and final chapter will explore a number of questions that have not yet been discussed, and which merit serious attention. I do not pretend that they are the only important questions, or that the list presented here is exhaustive. These are simply the aspects whose importance impressed itself upon me while I was writing this document and which, in my opinion, are worthy of reflection and research for anyone wishing to improve on the current system.

Family child care provider training

As we saw in Chapter 2, current regulations in Québec require early childhood educators working in centre-based care to have, at the very least, a college ECCE certificate, with three years of relevant experience in a child care setting in which their duties involved implementing a program of activities for children. Family child care providers are required to have completed a training program of at least 45 hours on their role, child development, health and nutrition, and the educational program. The regulations also state that they must devote six hours a year to professional development activities.[101]

Family child care has its own unique characteristics and it is normal and necessary that these be taken into account in the regulations and training requirements. In the current context, with early childhood and child care programs focusing essentially on centre-based care provided for groups of children of the same age, in settings specifically set up for the purpose, by salaried teachers working for a CPE, it would be neither useful nor relevant to make such programs – and, I stress, *in their current form* – compulsory for family child care providers. However, it would be useful and relevant to explore the various training programs in Québec, the rest of Canada and elsewhere, specifically designed for individuals who provide family child care, and to adopt stricter regulations concerning training and qualification requirements for regulated family child care providers supervised by CPEs. Forty-five hours of training seems very little if one considers the extent and importance of the role. It should not be forgotten that once the projected development of Québec's early childhood care and education system has been completed, 49% of its spaces will be in family child care homes. This raises the question, as Québec's Auditor General has asked, whether the creation of a system *"where staff qualification and teacher-child ratios vary according to the type of child care – be it centre-based, family child care or commercial day care"* will reach the objectives the Québec government has set in terms of child development and equal opportunity.[102]

We know that the quality of family child care is directly linked to the highest level of ECCE-related education of family child care providers and to their having taken a family child care-specific training course.[103] In my opinion, it would be possible to take rapid action in this area. It is not my intention to make formal recommendations but simply to point out that, just as the government has adopted various measures to encourage both ECEs in centre-

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[101] Décret concernant le règlement sur les Centres de la Petite Enfance – Décret 1069-97, August 20, 1997.
[102] Auditor General of Québec (1999). *Rapport Annuel : Chapitre Quatre.* On line: http://www.vgq.gouv.qc.ca/rappann/rapp99_2/chap4.htm.
[103] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., Tougas, J., LaGrange, A. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in regulated family child care across Canada.* Centre for Work, Families and Well-being, University of Guelph, Ontario, p. 94.

based care to complete their training and CPEs to conform to stricter regulations, other measures could also be taken that specifically concern the family child care sector. For example, the government could put pressure on training institutions to implement flexible training programs adapted to suit the unique characteristics of family child care, and that deal with relevant subject matter (see the research on this topic forthcoming from the Family Child Care Training project, a Child Care Visions project funded by Human Resources Development Canada), and provide support for the institutions to do so; establish child care fee rates that take into account family child care providers' formal training (see Manitoba's wage policies); and make it possible for them to hire a substitute when they must take a mandatory course during working hours, and compensate them for their lost earnings. These are only a few measures, but taken together they would make possible a rapid strengthening of family child care providers training regulations, while providing the sector with the means to meet these standards.

A double standard: CPEs vs. commercial child care centres

Currently, approximately 35% of spaces in centre-based care are in the commercial sector. Commercial child care centres occupy an important share of the market in Québec and are attended by a large number of children. However, the ratio of two qualified child care teachers out of three to be with the children 70% of the time that is in force in CPE centre-based care does not apply to commercial child care centres; these are only required to have one qualified teacher out of every three to be with the children 50% of the time. The argument is that commercial child care centres would be unable to recover their expenses if they applied the same ratio as in CPEs, as they are not eligible for the same subsidies as the non-profit sector. This is also the reason invoked by commercial centres to justify the lower pay and inferior working conditions of their employees, compared to those provided in CPEs. So, because of a flat cost issue – and a profit issue – a sizeable number of children in Québec are enrolled in child care centres where only a minority of teachers have the minimum qualifications required to perform their educational duties adequately, and where salaries and working conditions are among the worst in Québec. Yet, according to the Auditor General of Québec, under the family policy *"no matter the type of child care setting preferred by parents, all settings must meet the same standards with regards to child development, stimulation and learning."*[104]

Whatever the justifications, the government must reconsider and eliminate this double standard. Specialized training for teachers working with the children, salaries and working conditions all act as determinants of quality in child care centres. No financial consideration

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[104] Auditor General of Québec (1999). *Rapport Annuel: Chapitre Quatre*. On line: http://www.vgq.gouv.qc.ca/rappann/rapp99_2/chap04.htm.

should be used to justify the fact that such a large part of the system is made up of centres that do not comply with the basic rules for ensuring quality care.

Commercial child care centres are lobbying the Québec government to grant them subsidies comparable to those awarded the non-profit sector, arguing that, if they were given such support, they would be able to pay better wages and abide by the same training requirement as in CPEs. However, an analysis of cross-Canada data from *the You Bet I Care!* centre studies indicates that, to the contrary, even when access to government funding and in-kind donations is equal between the two sectors, commercial centres are likely to pay poorer wages, hire staff with lower qualifications (including centre directors) and have poorer staff/child ratios. These differences in predictors of quality between the two sectors are manifest in ratings of overall process quality as well. The author of this study of auspice points out that; *"between-sector differences in access to resources, while real, are not sufficient in themselves to explain the lower quality in the commercial sector".*[105] Would the Québec government not be wiser under such conditions to invest these sums – taken from public funds – in further developing the non-profit sector rather than in supporting private businesses? To ask is to know, especially when one looks at the state of child care in those Canadian provinces, notably New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Alberta, where the market has presided over the development of their child care system rather than the understanding that child care is an essential public service and responsibility.

The lack of a male presence

When talking child care, we are talking about women and women's issues. This is not true of all fields related to young children, but it is nonetheless the case in areas where the profession is not clearly established and working conditions leave much to be desired. Thus, according to a study of the child care sector conducted in 1998,[106] more than 95% of child care workers were women. In addition, we know that a growing number of children live in single-parent families where the head of the family is a woman.

One is obliged to wonder about the consequences of this absence of men in the daily life of young children. It is disturbing in more ways than one, both from the point of view of the men who do not have the joy and privilege of participating continually in the life of their children or sharing their everyday accomplishments and discoveries, and from that of the children who are deprived of the presence of male role-models in their daily life. An increasing number of studies in psychology and other related fields of research attribute the

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[105] Doherty, G. and Friendly, M. (in preparation). *A study of auspice.* Occasional Paper #18. Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto.
[106] Beach, J. et al. (1998). *Our childcare workforce: From recognition to remuneration: More than a labour of love.* Ottawa.

appearance of behavioural problems in children to this very situation. Without embarking on a discussion of the validity and veracity of the studies, and without knowing all the reasons behind the behavioural problems, common sense dictates that our children, their fathers, and men in general would benefit from spending more time together, for small activities as much as for big events. At the same time, this would also permit more equitable distribution between men and women of the responsibilities concerning the care and education of children. I believe it is time to examine the pros and cons of a masculine presence in early childhood care and education. Do men want to be there, and what do the women think? Must incentives be used to attract men to the profession, or must we allow nature to take its course?

The status of family child care providers

In Chapter 3, on family child care, the subordinate relationship between the CPE and family child care providers was examined in terms of irritants and sources of tension in the sector. But there is a much more fundamental underlying issue: that of the family child care providers' status. From the point of view of both the Income Tax Act and the Labour Act, family child care providers are self-employed. At the same time, their association with the CPEs, by which their clientele, fees, program of activities and in many cases work schedule are determined, places them on the very borderline of employee status. Moreover, we know that two unions, the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ) and the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), currently have hundreds of family child care providers among their members who are in the process of applying for union certification.

The family child care providers' status is a complex issue and there is no unanimous opinion on it in the sector. However, this is not a valid reason to dismiss it and behave as if it did not exist. In some other countries family child are providers have employee status, and that experience could serve as the basis for an open discussion of the topic. The Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance (MFE) must commission its own studies and provide the various stakeholders — notably child care providers, parents, CPEs and unions — with data and information to inform their reflections. Rather than continuing to reflect and discuss behind closed doors, isolated from and wary of one another, they could participate actively in a constructive debate that might produce concrete and perhaps even consensual solutions. It is the MFE's responsibility to create a forum for discussion of the issue of the status of family child care providers.

CPEs: community-based small to medium-size businesses

Before the introduction of the CPEs, child care centres had a maximum of 60 spaces, which meant they had approximately 80 children, 15 or so employees and an annual budget of around $500,000. A centre's territory was limited to a big-city neighbourhood, or to a municipality and its immediate surroundings. A child care centre that had been on its feet for a few years, and that was running smoothly, could be overseen without much difficulty by a board of directors with the support of the centre's director. Family child care agencies had approximately 150 spaces apiece, some 200 children and roughly 30 to 40 family child care providers, for an annual budget of approximately $700,000. The agency's territory extended beyond neighbourhood or village boundaries but still, once it was well established, apart from the occasional upset, the board of directors with the agency director's help could be confident in its ability to fulfil its responsibilities.

The situation has changed. The CPEs have become community-based petites et moyennes entreprises (PMEs).[107] They provide both centre-based and family child care. Their administrative structure is much more complex than before. They work with one board of directors for the two settings, an executive director, administrative staff, coordinators and home visitors, child care teachers and family child care providers. Managing human, financial and physical resources, and overseeing pedagogical aspects present challenges as never before. Expertise acquired in one child care setting cannot necessarily be transposed to another, meaning that the CPEs must give themselves the means of gaining this expertise and of attaining goals related to productivity and performance. These PMEs are tenants or owners of several buildings that house centre-based care and administrative offices; they employ more than 30 salaried employees and co-ordinate roughly 50 child care providers, with an annual budget of a little over $2,000,000.

The boards of directors of these community-based PMEs are still composed of a majority of parents whose children are enrolled in the CPE; they have an ever-increasing number of responsibilities, and rely heavily on the knowledge and skills of the executive director to meet these. But, as we have seen, the regulations do not require the director of a CPE to have specialized training in management or in early childhood care and education. This is a major flaw that must be dealt with without delay; first, to support management staff who, in spite of their goodwill, cannot carry the full weight of the reform on their shoulders alone without the appropriate training; second, to reassure and confirm the board of directors in its decisions; and finally, to ensure sound and efficient management of public funds.

This complex and heavier administrative structure also brings with it the risk of cutting

[107] Québec term for small or medium-sized business organizations.

off the administration and board of directors from parents and front-line workers. The community orientation of CPEs manifests itself in the direct representation of the needs of the children and parents at the decision-making level. Unless good, solid channels of communication, consultation and dialogue are established, the sources of potential conflicts will multiply and dominate.

IN CONCLUSION

We could also discuss parent participation in these new structures, the role that has been given to parents, and the meaning attributed to this role. We could discuss the adult-child ratio, which is far too high among the youngest children, and the consequences this may have in terms of the quality of care. We could discuss school-age program staff training, and what would be the most appropriate training for supervising and assisting school-age children in their learning. We could discuss the place and characteristics of the kindergartens under the MEQ. There are numerous issues to raise and much room for improvement. Now that the early childhood care and education system is firmly established in Québec, and its existence is not in all likelihood threatened, now that the proposed guidelines are coherent and based on commonly accepted social objectives – notably our children's development – success in school, equal opportunity, the war on poverty, and support for families, it is time to examine all the other issues that will contribute to improving the system.

Improving the existing system does not imply denying or criticizing the massive efforts that have been made on all sides to get this far. Improvement simply means going further, expanding the limits to ensure that a greater number of Québec children and families benefit from the system, and that a greater number of individuals working in the sector enjoy working conditions that promote their own well-being and that of the children with whom they work.

Appendix A

Parents' expressed preference for family child care

In Québec, 49.2% of children are cared for on a regular basis (while their parents are working or studying). A quarter of these children (24.4%) are cared for at home; 22.2% go to a school-age program; 15.1% attend centre-based care; 8.0% are in regulated family child care (CPE coordinated); and 28.2% are cared for in an informal family child care setting.[108] Family child care (regulated and informal) is thus the most widespread form of child care (36.2%) and the setting that parents know best – and it is normal to prefer what one knows best.

Also, family care is a form of child care that has always existed. If no grandmother or aunt lived nearby and looked after the children while the parents were at work, there was a neighbour. This form of child care brought with it the assurance that the person looking after the children knew them well, had the time to look after them, wished to do so, and had the same type of background and shared the same values as the parents. It was also the least expensive form of child care; the women who cared for the children were paid very little or simply did it for free.

Nowadays, when parents choose to enrol their children in family child care, they look for the same characteristics: proximity to the family's residence, shared ideas and values, individualized service where the child care provider knows the child well and there is a warm and caring relationship. The terms "second home" and "second mother" are often used, not to mention that this type of care is often less expensive than the others currently available on the market.

Parents also consider family child care to be a more flexible child care arrangement, more readily adaptable to suit their family and professional lives. Child care providers do indeed agree to take care of all the children from a single family, from infants to school-age children. There is no need to separate the children; they can grow up together, strengthening family ties. Parents can leave all their children at the same place in the morning, and pick them all up there at the end of the day. And if the parents are delayed at work or elsewhere and are late, they know that their children are safe, at home in a family which, to all intents and purposes, resembles their own.

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[108] Bureau de la statistique du Québec (1999). Enquête sur les besoins des familles en matière de services de garde, p. 54.

Because family child care takes place in a private residence, because the group of children is small and comprised of children of different ages, and because the same person usually cares for the children and stays with them through all phases of their development, it is similar both in nature and structure to what the children would experience if they were at home with their parents. This element of continuity is not without its appeal for parents; to a certain extent it assuages the feelings of guilt parents sometimes experience at having to entrust their child to someone else's care.

Several studies have shown that parents develop much closer ties with their children's family child care provider than with child care centre staff. The provider often becomes a friend, a confidante, and a resource person who advises the parent on matters concerning the child's education as well as other aspects of family life.[109] Often their relationship continues after the children leave child care. In a context of increasingly dispersed, if not broken, families, the view that family child care provides a setting in which the extended family is recreated is reassuring to parents.

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[109] Kyle, Irene (1997). *Ontario home child care providers' reports of their training and education experiences:* Background research paper prepared for The Family Day Care Training Project, Canadian Child Care Federation.

Appendix B

Link between the size of one group and providers' income

With an average of 5.5 children per provider, one would prefer that the groups of children were smaller. Anyone who has taken care of children knows how difficult it can be to deal with a group of six children whose ages range from under 18 months to over 6 years. It is not a question of simply ensuring their health and safety. Providers must create a stimulating environment, a setting that fosters the optimal development of each and every child. They must develop ties with the individual children, devoting time to each of them daily, paying attention to their needs.

However, if the groups were any smaller, the family child care providers' revenue would be that much lower. Already their salary gives one pause if one considers the importance of their work. A survey of regulated family child care providers, carried out as part of the study on the child care sector,[110] showed that the mean gross income of Québec's family child care providers in 1998 was $13,700 per year and their net income before taxes, once child care-related expenses had been deducted, was $6,800. Applying the same logic,[111] and based on the *maximum* daily rate of $26 granted to family child care providers in the wake of the child care sector salary adjustment negotiations (cf. Chapter 1, Section 4), the mean gross income of a family child care provider looking after the six children authorized by the regulations would be $37,440 per year, and her net income before taxes would be $18,795, for an hourly wage of $6.87 ($5.55 if she is entitled to the *minimum* daily rate of $21). In the case of a family child care provider taking care of nine children at the $26-a-day rate, the hourly income would come to $10.30 ($8.32 at the minimum rate), which she would have to share with an assistant. It should be remembered that family child care providers have none of the social benefits (holidays, sick leave, vacation, disability insurance, pension plan) to which an employer would normally contribute, so these must come out of her meagre income.

One might ask how, under such conditions, the government can hope to use the CPEs to tempt large numbers of individuals to opt for careers in family child care – which is what it must do because, as we have seen, the development of the ECCE system in Québec, at least in the short- and medium- term, is riding to a large extent on family child care. Knowing that the quality of family child care is tied notably to the provider's level of income, degree of job

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[110] Canadian Child Care Federation (1998). *Providing home child care for a living: A Survey of providers working in the unregulated sector in their own home.* CCCF (Ottawa).

[111] 57 hours worked per week, 48 weeks a year, 49.8% of deductions work-related.

satisfaction, and commitment to family child care as a career,[112] it is clear that measures are needed to change conditions in the sector and make it possible for the people working in it to earn a suitable and satisfactory living, a topic I will explore further in the final chapter of this paper.

[112] Doherty, G., Lero, D., Goelman, H., Tougas, J., LaGrange, A. (2000). *Caring and learning environments: Quality in regulated family child care across Canada,* Table 8.3.

Appendix C

What is meant by the family environment?

The *Act Respecting Childcare Centres and Childcare Services* specifies that family child care must take place in a private residence, and the regulations state that *"the private residence shall contain a kitchen, an area designated for eating, a room equipped with sanitary facilities and a room for the children's games and activities."*[113] It seems clear that, in the minds of the legislators, the different rooms of the house are the physical environment in which family child care is provided, and the MFE seems to have a similar interpretation. However, a tendency observed in a growing number of family child care homes, especially those caring for larger numbers of children – setting up a specific room designated for the child care children, in which all the routine and educational activities take place – has given rise to a great deal of controversy in the field.

The CPEs that grant accreditation to family child care homes insist that the providers use various rooms in their house for child care. To the administrators, reducing the physical environment of the children cared for in a family setting to a single room adjoining the other rooms of the house, or to the basement, goes against the spirit of the Act and the regulations. If the legislator had foreseen such a possibility, regulations would exist regarding physical space and lighting as in centre-based care. To the family child care providers, designating one room for their child care allows them to preserve the privacy of their family life while working at home. Moreover, they often use the expression *garderie en milieu familial* (child care centre in a family setting) to describe their service. For providers, the family dimension comes more from children from the same family being able, despite their different ages, to be looked after together than from the day care children having access to the different rooms in their house and being in close contact with the members of their family.[114]

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[113] Government of Québec (1997). Regulation Respecting Childcare Centre, Chapter V, Division II.

[114] Interview with Natalie D'Amours, President of the Association des éducatrices en milieu familial du Québec

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